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**A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF ADOLESCENTS'
PERCEPTIONS ON PEER COUNSELING**

by

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MINI-DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree



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APPENDIX A

Letters to request participation in this research

APPENDIX B

Transcript 2 of the second series of tape-recorded interviews

APPENDIX C

Protocol for the independent coder

DEDICATIONS

This research is dedicated to the following people who have inspired me throughout my research:

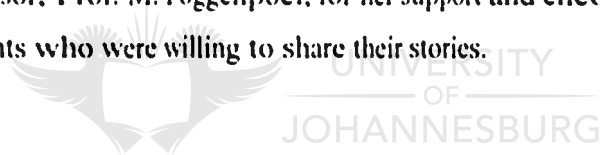
- My husband, Zainodeen, for always believing in me, for his encouragement and for his support.
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Summary

Adolescence is a phase in human development that is synonymous with change, namely physical, emotional and cognitive changes. Peer groups start playing an important role in the lives of adolescents. Subsequently peer groups can be considered as a possible intervention strategy to assist adolescents through this period in their lives. A possible solution to the problems adolescents are experiencing could be to train their peers as counselors. Peer counselors are thus adolescents who have been trained by professionals with basic counseling skills, namely listening, summarising and how to do referrals.

Peer counseling systems exist in other countries, with much success. The researcher was interested to find out what the impact of peer counseling will be in a South African context, in a specific school. Thus the impact of peer counseling in a specific socio-economic community was explored. This specific community can be viewed as a microcosm of the South African community at large.

The research objectives were as follows:

- to explore and describe the perceptions of adolescents who have been exposed to peer counseling at their school in Gauteng; and
- to describe guidelines for educators who are implementing peer counseling at a secondary school in Gauteng.

The data collected from the interviews with the adolescents were used to formulate an effective peer-counseling programme suited for South African schools. Through this approach the researcher was able to gain insight into the perceptions of adolescents regarding peer counseling.

A qualitative research approach helped the researcher to understand and interpret the meaning that adolescents give to peer counseling.

The information gathered in this study will help determine properties for further research on peer counseling. Focus group interviews were conducted. This study was descriptive as it aimed to obtain adolescents' perceptions on peer counseling. The researcher attempted to find out what adolescents' perceptions are on peer counseling by conducting focus group interviews.

The participants were from a homogeneous group in that they were all adolescents who have been trained as peer counselors, from the same secondary school and had all been exposed to peer counseling. All participants who participated in this study were exposed to peer counseling, either through training as peer counselors or interaction with peer counselors.

Interviews were conducted with two groups of adolescents who had been trained as peer counselors. Peer counseling was viewed in a paradoxical way. The major categories and sub-categories were as follows:

- a viewpoint of peer counseling as a way of caring for and assisting oneself and others –“making a difference”;
- a “stigmatised view” of peer counseling; and
- a viewpoint that necessary structures should be put in place to support peer counseling (recommendations/suggestions).

From the interviews conducted with the two groups of peer counselors, recommendations were made with relation to improving peer counseling at their school.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND RATIONAL

Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while and leave footprints on your hearts. And we are never, ever the same. Unknown (in Canefield, Hansen, Hansen & Dunlap, 1999:154).

1.1. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

Since the abolishment of apartheid and the evolution of the “new” South Africa, change has become an evident feature in the lives of all South Africans. We have experienced governmental changes, economic changes, social changes and a change in our education system. Change becomes burdensome if one is consciously aware of it, hence it is important to cope with change to ensure that one is able to deal with the anxiety and distress of it. All these changes influence society at large and the youth in specific.

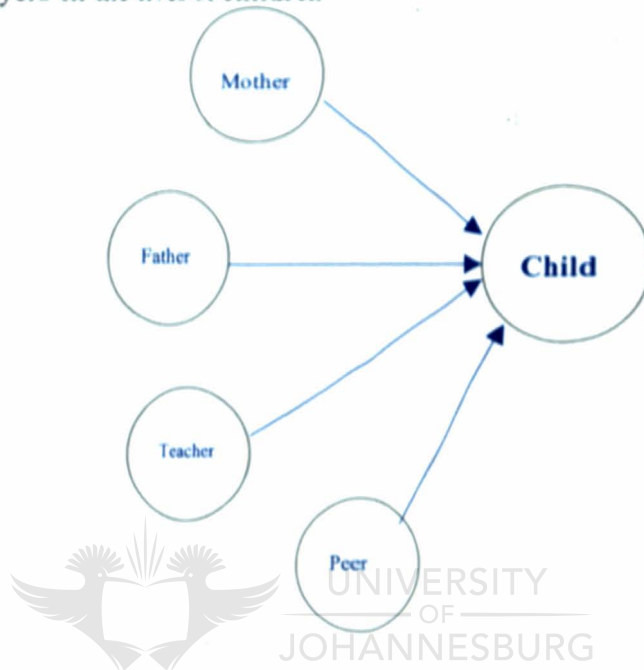
The people in South Africa go through the same changes as the country. A stage in human development, which is largely characterised by change, is the phase of adolescence. Adolescence is a stage in human development specifically accompanied by an increase in cognitive skills as well as rapid physical changes (Jones, 1980:5).

When one speaks about youth or adolescents, it is imperative to place them in context of their family relations, their school environment and their association with their peers.

The following figure of Harris (1995:468) can act as a model to indicate all the important stakeholders that adolescents interact with on a daily basis. This figure is relevant for this research because it assists in putting adolescents' interactions with others into perspective. The researcher will briefly discuss the interaction between adolescents and

these stakeholders in order to establish how adolescents view their relationships with these key players in their lives.

Figure 1.1. Key players in the lives of children



According to this diagram children interact with three important groups, namely their parents (mother and father), teachers and peers.

1.1.1 Adolescents and family

According to Weiten (2001:464) the increasing prevalence of people remaining single, cohabitating, getting divorced, being single parents, having stepfamilies and 'normal families', voluntarily remaining childless, having children out of wedlock, and of wives and mothers working, has made the traditional nuclear family a deceptive mirage that does not reflect the diversity of family. The above-mentioned aspects have ultimately impacted on the way in which children are raised in the home and this inadvertently influences how children perceive the world, their community and specifically their school.

Lingren (1995:1) mentions the following facts about parents, adolescents and peer relations:

- During adolescents, parents and adolescents become more physically and psychologically distant from each other.
- Increases in family strains (economic pressures, divorce, etc.) have prompted teenagers to depend more on peers for emotional support.
- Parent-adolescent conflict increases between childhood and early adolescence.

According to Mazrui (1987:21) two broad principles should influence and inform social reform in Africa in the coming millennium. One is the imperative of looking inwards towards the wider humanity; the other is the imperative of looking outward towards the wider humanity. The inward imperative requires a more systematic investigation into the cultural preconditions of the success of each project, of each piece of legislation, of each system of government. Since the world is becoming a global village Africa and South Africa cannot just look inward to its own past. The arrangement with the twenty first century has to include sensitivity to the wider world of the human race as a whole. A number of stages can be determined in the evolution of the triple heritage if one is to move toward cultural synthesis.

African parents (Black, White, Coloured and Indian) need to emancipate themselves from mental slavery and begin to develop a mindset, which has pride in its cultural heritage. A heritage that is not Euro-centric, Asiatic or Afrocentric. Mazrui (1987:44) states that, instead, it should be a combination of the three. Known to intellectuals like, Ali Mazrui, as the 'triple heritage'.

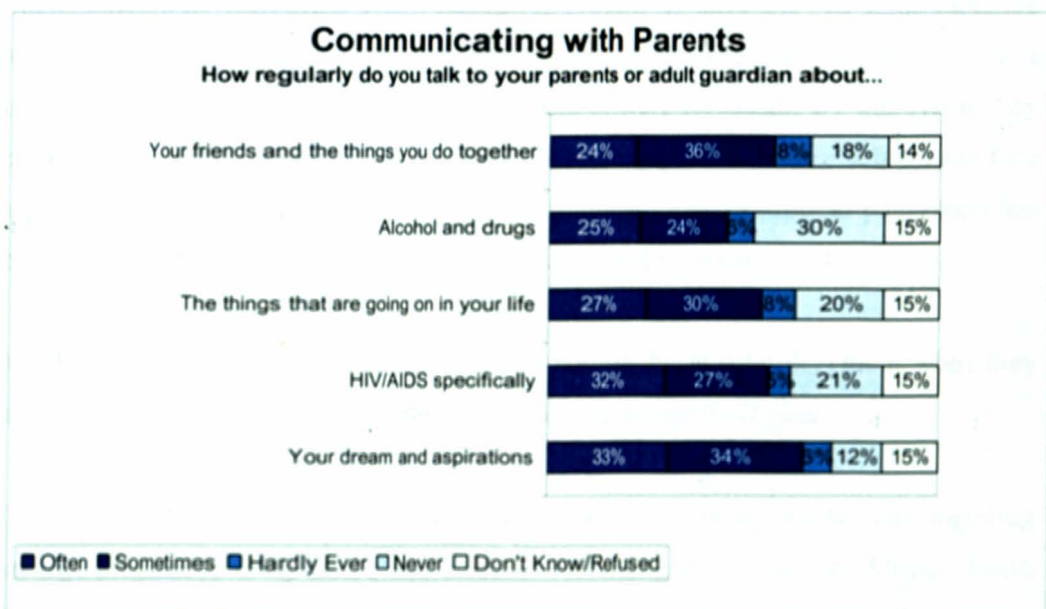
The role for African parents may be significant because the challenge of social and political innovation far exceeds the technical challenges, hence, they should harness the social experience and innovation of African people and align them with successful management techniques from the West and East. According to Mbigi and Maree (1995:3-4), it requires careful and creative strategic alignment by African parents as managers of the families, in particular their offspring. They stress that it should not be

imported from the East or West. Instead, it is important for African parents to adopt some Western and Eastern parental techniques, which will enable African families to attain competitive parity. To Africanise our family structures, it becomes crucial to understand what it means to be African. Africa's achievements and genius does not lie in technology, but in social and spiritual spheres (Mbigi & Maree, 1995:4). They further add, "... if Africa is going to compete and win globally, it will have to draw on its spiritual and social heritage." (Mbigi & Maree, 1995: 4). Where are we as South Africa in terms of our youth?

1.1.2 South African youth

A national survey of South African youth was conducted in October – November 2001, (Love Life's for us, 2001:16) regarding adolescents' communication with their parents more than half of them rarely spoke to their parents about their dreams, HIV/ AIDS, things going on in their lives, alcohol and drugs as well as their friends and things they do together. So who are they speaking to? Perhaps our school system provides them with the opportunity to discuss their problems.

Table 1.1. Communicating with parents (Love Life's for us, 2001:16)



To understand the South African society, it is imperative to understand the youth if we want to salvage them in some way or the other. The South African society is made up of critical components, namely the African heritage and Ubuntuism, which affect it adversely and form an integral and inseparable bond with it.

Manaster (1977:233) says that there is a degree of personal isolation and therefore dependence on social institutions, which is much different from the close-knit interdependent family that existed in the past. Could the schooling environment act as this social institution? I think so as children spend most of their time at school.

1.1.3 Schools and educators

"We create the societies we desire through our schools, but the societies we dream of and proclaim as ideal... are rarely mirrored in the learning institutions to which we entrust our children" (Irwin in Bovair & McLaughlin, 1993:97).

The education system in South Africa has also been affected by these changes. With the implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), we have moved to an education system, which focuses on outcomes and performance indicators. Class sizes have increased and because parents did not understand or were not taught by this system they have alienated themselves from their children's learning process. Many schools also face serious behaviour problems and maintaining discipline without corporal punishment has become a tiresome task for most educators with very little success.

Most adolescents spend between six and eight hours a day at school. This is where they are exposed to different educators, the school curriculum and their peers.

Our school system is displaying a frightening reality concerning adolescents regarding teenage pregnancy, drug abuse and suicide. According to the South African Health Review (2000:1; 4; 5), twenty one per cent (8.8 Million) of young South Africans are

adolescents between 10 and 19 years of age. Thirty five percent of all adolescents would have been pregnant or would have had a child by the age of nineteen. The highest proportions of deaths among young people are seen to be as a result of injuries, including all forms of accidents, homicides and suicides. Recent studies indicate that one third of the young generation will be lost because of drugs. Adolescents are experimenting at an earlier age than before with drugs. Four years ago, six percent of all school children were experimenting with drugs by the time they reached Grade twelve, Hamman (2002:1)

Ultimately it is not about rebuilding tribal culture. It is about establishing a selective culture that recognizes European, Eastern as well as African cultures, and simultaneously influencing society and specifically the youth through schools to become positive individuals who would contribute meaningful to schools, communities and society at large.

1.2 RATIONALE

Amidst all these changes that society encounters it becomes increasingly obvious that these changes impact significantly on our youth, hence they are finding it extremely difficult to cope in our society. This is evident when one considers the high teenage pregnancy rates, suicide rate, drug abuse and rape cases involving adolescents, not to mention their poor academic performances. Our youth have serious problems and ultimately schools are held accountable for most of these problems.

What are we at educational facilities doing to alleviate this situation?

- All schools teach a learning programme called Life Orientation. Some of the skills learnt in this subject should equip adolescents to make better decisions and to be in a better position to solve their problems. Topics like self-esteem, communication and listening skills, respect for your self is but a few of the topics that should be covered. If these aspects were covered thoroughly why are youth still finding themselves in problematic situations?

- Some schools make use of social workers or psychologists to assist them: mostly those who can afford to pay for these services.
- Selected schools can financially afford to send educators to be trained as counselors. Even with these trained educators at schools there are a vast amount of adolescents facing problems. It is therefore not possible for these counselors to reach all the children who need assistance.

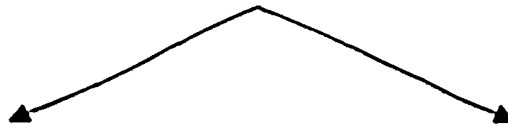
The question remains: Who do these other adolescents, turn to when faced with problems? The transition of adolescents from their families to the peer world and into adulthood encompasses a major aspect of their socialization, Grinder (1978:321). According to a survey done by Love Life sixty five percent of adolescents first run to their friends in times of trouble (S'camto Print, 2003:4). At school adolescents spend most of their day with their peers. One is thus inclined to think that they would turn to their peers when faced with a problem.

According to Gills (1992:74), as more time is spent at school and in school activities than at home, peers and mutual interest groups begin to replace the family in a number of supportive roles. In particular, the adolescent in this stage relies heavily on the peer group as a sounding board for new ideas and behaviours. Cowie and Wallace (2000:9), confirm this by stating that young people are much more likely to offer help to their peers in distress if there is a system within which to operate. Educators we should strive to create systems in schools which enhance helpful behaviour. In this way we can transform schools from an organization that is viewed as one that is cold and indifferent to one that is warm, friendly and emotionally open.

According to Cowie and Wallace (2000:9) peer support builds on the resources that friends spontaneously offer one another and it can happen anywhere and at any age group.

According to Cowie and Wallace (2000:9) peer support can be divided into two broad categories:

Figure 1.1. Categories of peer support



1. Emotional Support

- Befriending
- Mediator/conflict resolution
- Counseling-base approach

2. Education and information giving

- Peer tutoring
- Peer education
- Mentoring

For the purpose of this study it is important to define the concepts under emotional support.

➤ Befriending



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Befriending is usually describes as an approach that builds on the natural helping skills which children learn through the process of everyday interaction with friends and the family, (Cowie & Wallace, 2000:15)

➤ Mediator or conflict resolution

Conflict resolution and mediation approaches offer a structured method for empowering young people themselves to defuse interpersonal disagreements among peer, including bullying, racist name-calling, fighting and quarrelling, (Cowie & Wallace, 2000:18).

➤ Counseling-based interventions

According to Cowie and Wallace (2000:19) counseling based intervention is more than befriending and mediation, it is training that is often carried out by a qualified counselor or psychologist. Peer supporter are given a wide range of counseling skills and are provided with supervision based on a professional counseling model.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As an educator and counselor at my school I find myself assisting only the learners referred to me by other educators or those who were comfortable enough to speak to me. Through my observation of adolescents I have seen what a tremendous impact their peers have on them in terms of how they act, dress and behave. Peer groups can be considered as a possible intervention strategy to assist adolescents.

Louw (1995:422) highlights the following as positive influences regarding interaction and conforming to the peer group:

- Within the peer group the adolescents have the opportunity to learn and experiment with new roles, which helps him to develop effective social functioning.
- It offers opportunity for communication with the opposite sex and for forming close relationships.
- The group is a source of sexual information and helps the individual to develop norms for sexual activity.
- Identification with the group facilitates emancipation from the family home.
- In the group the adolescents can speak freely about fears, feelings of confusion, ideas and dreams, and thus finds release for his emotional tension.
- The group offers the adolescent who is experiencing problems in his relationship with parents, warm and friendly companionship, thus providing him with the feeling of security, acceptance and understanding.

- The group provides the adolescent with behavioural norms for this transitional stage, thus he develops a group identity.
- If the group has a high status, it offers the adolescent the opportunity to share in its status.
- The group contributes to the adolescent's formation of his identity. The members of the group help the adolescent to resolve the conflicts within himself and with others, and the group is a source of feedback on his personality traits, his appearance and behaviour.
- The group offers opportunities for participation in recreational activities.
- The group is an important agent for socialisation.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that if adolescents prefer the company of their peers that they would ask their peer for advice or that their peers would be in a position to offer them sound and constructive advice. Possible solutions to the problems adolescents are experiencing could be peer counseling.

When trained and supervised individuals offer listening support, alternatives and other verbal and non-verbal interactions to peer group members, they can be seen as peer counselors (Coetzee, 1999:31). Peer counseling can be classified as a "paraprofession" (Ender & Winston, 1984:83). This refers to individual who has not received extensive professional training but has been selected specifically for a particular programme. These individual has been trained by professionals and is provided with ongoing supervision.

Peer counseling systems exist in other countries around the world, with much success. According to Carr (2003:1-3), peer counseling is well established internationally and appears to be having significant impact on the persons involved as well on the broader community. Different programmes have been established in the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Thailand. These programmes could serve as a model or framework that can be implemented in South Africa, obviously contextualising and customising it to fit within a South African framework from a social, economical, political and technological perspective.

The concern regarding peer counseling in a South African context is whether it can be regarded as a workable intervention strategy to assist adolescents?

The following research questions can therefore be generated:

- What are adolescents' perceptions about peer counseling?
- How can guidelines be formulated for implementing peer counseling at schools?

The information gathered in this study will be used as background information for implementing a peer counseling support programme in a specific school in Gauteng.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aims of this research are:

- To explore and describe the perceptions of adolescents who have been exposed to peer counseling at their school in Gauteng.
- To describe guidelines for educators who are implementing peer counseling at a secondary school in Gauteng.

1.5 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE/ASSUMPTIONS

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:107) describes paradigms as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimates of first principles. Lincoln and Guba (1995:15) say that a paradigm is a worldview, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Thus the paradigmatic perspective of this study will be discussed under meta-theoretical assumptions, theoretical assumptions and methodological assumptions. Whilst doing this the researcher will constantly bare in mind that the aim of this research is to explore and describe the perceptions of adolescents who have been exposed to peer counseling at their school in Gauteng.

1.5.1 Meta-theoretical assumptions

Meta-theoretical assumptions are important beliefs that the researcher has about man, his environment and the society he lives in. Erikson's theory (Weiten, 2001:460), which states that the premiere challenge of adolescents is the struggle to form a clear sense of identity, is the one to be used by the researcher. This struggle that Erikson mentions involves working out a stable concept of oneself as a unique individual and embracing an ideology or system of values that provides a sense of direction.

The researcher views adolescents as individuals who when faced with problems will turn to their peers for support. Constructing an identity involves defining who you are, what you value, and the directions you choose to pursue in life (Berk, 1989:438).

Peers play a pertinent role in adolescent's lives, thus training them as peer counselors, will assist to be better equip adolescents to assist each other when asked for advice. It is possible to train adolescents to be effective peer counselors. When placed in the right environment, with a good support base from educators at a particular school, they can have a great impact in assisting others.

1.5.2 Theoretical assumptions

These are the tentative belief systems of the researcher regarding the use of peer counseling as an intervention strategy at school to assist adolescents.

The researcher will make use of the theoretical assumptions of Erikson as the basis for this research. Erikson (Gillis, 1992:70) refers to five stages to the development of adolescents. For the purpose of this study the researcher is concerned with stage five, where Erikson refers to adolescents as the age group between twelve and twenty years. Erikson (1963:261) remarks: *"Adolescents is a period of rapid change – physical, physiological, psychological, and social; a time when all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are more or less questioned again"*.

According to Erikson (Berk, 1989:438) during this period, what adolescents once took for granted they now question - through a process of inner soul-searching. they shift through characteristics that define them with new commitments. Furthermore, adolescents in the words of Erikson (Gillis, 1992:69) has the following to say about adolescents:

"In the process of 'finding themselves', adolescents must establish a sexual, moral, political and vocational identity that is relatively stable, consistent and mature. This identity ushers in adulthood as it bridges the gap between the experiences of childhood and the personal goals, values and decisions that permit each young person to take his or her place in society"

Adolescents also experiment freely with different roles, attitudes and personalities prior to making important life decisions (Gillis, 1992:69).

1.5.2.1. Concept definition

i) Adolescents



Louw (1995:377) defines adolescence as follows:

"Adolescents is the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood. The term "adolescence," is derived from the Latin verb adolescere, which means "to grow up" or "to grow to adulthood".

Gillis (1992:70) states that adolescents is commonly divided into three stages:

- Puberty: Girls: 12 years
Boys: 14 years
- Mid-adolescents: 14-16 years
- Late adolescents: 17 years onwards.

For the purpose of this study the researcher will be working with adolescents in the mid-adolescent phase. According to (Gillis, 1992:73) this period is known as: “ *The crossover period between childhood and adulthood*”. Gillis continues by stating that this period coincides with Erikson’s moratorium, a time for experimenting with different aspects of personal development, and acquiring the skills necessary to make the decision leading to adulthood. As the experimentation is not based on a secure foundation, adolescents experience feelings of ambivalence and insecurity.

ii) Counseling

The American Psychological Association’s Division of Counseling Psychology (in Gillis: 1992:2) defines counseling as: “*Helping individuals towards overcoming obstacles to their personal growth, wherever these may be encountered, and towards the optimal development of their personal resources*”.

iii) Peers group



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According to The Oxford Dictionary (1982:756), peer group means those of the same status as, and associated with, a person.

iv) Mediator

Mediators are trained as facilitators of the counseling process using active listening skills, paraphrasing, and eliciting feelings and solutions. Peer mediation, which includes conflict resolution skills, offers student options where they can learn to value diversity and resolve differences peacefully (Gilhooley & Scheuch, 2000:3).

1.5.3 Methodological assumptions

The data collected from the interviews with the adolescents will be used to formulate an effective peer-counseling programme suited for South African schools. Focus group

interviews as stated by Morgan (1997:3) serve as the primary means of collecting qualitative data and this will enable the researcher to explore the experiences of adolescents as they are directly affected by the implementation of a peer counseling support group. By using this approach the researcher will be able to gain insight into the perceptions of adolescents regarding peer counseling. The researcher will bracket her own experiences in order to understand those of adolescents and educators. This will help ensure that trustworthiness is adhered to.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In order to achieve the research aim the researcher will make use of a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design.

1.6.1 Research design

McMillian and Schumacher (1993:157) refers to research design as a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures. A qualitative study explores and describes phenomena. This study is qualitative because it allows the researcher to explore the experiences adolescence and educators regarding the workability of implementing a peer counseling support system at secondary school level. It is also descriptive, as it will come up with guidelines for selecting adolescents who can be trained as peer counselors and also practical guidelines on how it can be fitted into a schooling environment.

1.6.2 Research method

The research will be structured in two phases.

- The first phase will be to explore and describe adolescent's perceptions regarding peer counseling in a secondary school in Gauteng.
- The second phase entails the description of guidelines for educators that could be used when implementing a peer-counseling programme at secondary school

level. During this phase measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical measures will be implemented.

1.6.2.1 Phase One: Exploration and description of adolescent's perceptions regarding peer counseling in a secondary school in Gauteng.

In this phase interviews will be conducted with adolescents to explore their experiences of peer counseling.

i) Data collection

A purposive sample method (Strydom & De Vos, 1998:198) will be done of adolescents between the ages of 15 to 17 years of age. The notion behind this is because the researcher wishes to get information from the homogenous group of adolescents. The researcher will make use an in-depth, face-to-face interviewing approach prescribed by: De Vos and Fouché, (1998:90) in order to gather data.

ii) Data analysis

Tesch's approach (Creswell, 1994:155) to data analyzing method will be used to reduce the information into themes or categories. Data analysis will be discussed in chapter 2.

iii) Literature control

The researcher will do a literature control (McMillian & Schumacher, 1993:155). The aim being to build a body of accepted knowledge on the topic and to enable the reader to gain further insight from the proposed and results of this study. The literature control will also indicate the results of other studies that are closely related to this study (Creswell, 1994:20).

1.6.2.2 Phase two: Description of guidelines that could be used by educators when implementing a peer-counseling programme at secondary school level.

Data collected during this phase will be used to draw up guidelines that could be used when implementing a peer counseling programme at secondary school level.

i) Ethical measures

Participants will know that they have the choice to participate or refuse to participate. The information gathered from the participants will be treated as confidential. The researcher will be open and honest with learners and educators who choose to participate in this research.

The following ethical measures as stated by Strydom (1998:24) will be taken into consideration:

- Respondents will be thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the research. They will thus be given an opportunity to withdraw from the research if they so wish. According to Dane (1990:44), an ethical obligation rests with the researcher to protect subjects against any form of physical discomfort, which may emerge, within reasonable limits, from the project research.
- The participating learners will be informed about the goal of the research, namely to gather enough information about how feasible it would be to implement a peer counseling programme at secondary schools. This will enable them to give consent to participate in the research from an informed position.
- The researcher will be open and not deliberately misrepresent facts about the research in order to get learners to participate in the research study.
- Information obtained from the learners would be held confidential unless otherwise agreed upon in advance.

- The researcher will remain objective and refrain from making value judgments with regard to the adolescents.
- The researcher will communicate the results of the study with the adolescents with the aim to minimize misunderstanding

After the completion of the research interview, the researcher will rectify any misconceptions, which may have arisen in the minds of participants. This will be done by providing participants with a debriefing session opportunity to work through their experiences and the aftermath thereof.

ii) Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Guba's model to ensure trustworthiness as in Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel (1998:331) and Krefting (1990:215) will be applied. The following four criteria namely, truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality will be applied. For truth-value is credibility, applicability is transferability; consistency is dependability and for neutrality is conformability. The application of these criteria will be discussed in chapter 2.

1.7 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data collection and data analysis, conclusions will be formulated, limitations and recommendations will be discussed in order to help the school implement and select learners to participate in a peer counseling support programme at school level.

1.8 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The content of this mini- dissertation will stand as follows:

CHAPTER 1: Background and rationale.

CHAPTER 2: Research design and methods.

CHAPTER 3: Results and literature control.

CHAPTER 4: This chapter will present guidelines for schools, reflect conclusions, limitation, recommendations and a summary of the study.

1.9 SUMMARY

This chapter describes the researcher's ideas. The aim being to describe all the processes that will take place in this research. The rationale, problem statement, research objectives, paradigmatic perspective, research design and method will be discussed. In chapter two will give greater attention to the research method and design.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Where no plan is laid, where the disposal of time is surrendered merely to the chances of incident, chaos will soon reign. (Victor Hugo in Mc Quirk, 2002:30).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one the researcher gave an overview of the study. In this chapter the objectives, the research design and method will be discussed. This will help clarify how the researcher will implement the qualitative research method regarding adolescents' perceptions on peer counseling.

The intent of the researcher is to gain insight into what adolescents' perspectives are of peer counseling systems as a viable means to assist them with their everyday problems. According to Schurink (1998:241), the qualitative paradigm stems from an antipositivistic, interpretative approach, is idiographic, thus holistic in nature, and the main aim is to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. The researcher will investigate the views and perceptions of adolescents in order to explore the practicality of implementing such a programme at secondary school level.

2.1.1 The type of design

The various strategies of enquiry used by qualitative researchers will differ depending on the purpose of the study, the nature of the research question; and the skills and resources available to the researcher (Morse, 1994:223). Denzin and Lincoln (1994:202-208) mentions phenomenology and ethnomethodology as one of the tools that one can use to design a qualitative research design. These are the method that will be used for the purpose of this research. The phenomenological approach as stated by Creswell (1994:12) will enable the researcher to explore the experience of adolescents as they are

directly affected by the implementation of a peer counseling support group. The aim of this approach is to help the researcher to understand and interpret the meaning that adolescents give to peer counseling. In order to accomplish this the researcher should be able to enter the subject's life world and place himself in the shoes of the subjects (De Vos & Fouché, 1998:80).

2.1.2 Characteristics of a qualitative research problem

Morse (1994:120) states the following as the characteristics of a qualitative research problem:

- a) the concept is "immature" due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research;
- b) there is a notion that the available theory may be inaccurate, inappropriate, incorrect, or bias;
- c) a need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory; or
- d) the nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to qualitative measures.

Merriam (1998:6-8) further states the following to be characteristics of a qualitative research design:

- a) qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.
- b) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
- c) qualitative research involves fieldwork.
- d) qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy.
- e) this type of research focuses on process, meaning and understanding, the product of qualitative study is richly descriptive.

A lot of research, implementation and evaluation has been done in other countries with regard peer counseling, however not much has been done in South African schools.

Programmes developed and implemented in other countries would not necessarily work in a South African context, thus making some of the information inappropriate. South African adolescents can be regarded as unique because of the many different varieties of languages and cultural difference that they have. These are different to those of the rest of the world. It is thus important to research and explore the opinions of South African adolescents concerning the implementation and practicality of a peer-counseling programme at their school.

2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is:

- To explore and describe the perceptions of adolescents who have been exposed to peer counseling at their school in Gauteng.
- To describe guidelines for educators who are implementing peer counseling at a secondary school in Gauteng.

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

A research design can be defined as “views a researcher designs as a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to be conducted” according to (Thyer, 1998:123). The research design and method guiding this study will be described in this section.

2.3.1 Research Design

For this research a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual design, which aims to give insight into adolescent’s perceptions on peer counseling, was used.

2.3.1.1 Qualitative

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2), qualitative research can be as a multiperspective approach. different qualitative techniques and data collection methods are utilised. It aims to describe and make sense of the social interaction in terms of the meanings that the subjects attach to it. A qualitative research approach will be used in this study because qualitative research is focus is on the product or outcome (Creswell, 1994:162). The qualitative research interview aims at obtaining as many nuanced descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee's life world as possible (Kvale, 1983:175). It is important for the researcher to establish what adolescents' perspective are on peer counseling, as they are ultimately the ones who would make use of such a support system. According to Schurink (1998:243) the qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participant's account of meaning, experience or perceptions. Descriptive data are gathered in the participant's own spoken words. One would thus be able to identify the adolescents' beliefs and values about peer counseling in this way.



2.3.1.2 Exploratory

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:43), the goal (objective to us) in exploratory studies is the exploration of a relatively unknown research area. Exploratory studies are a valuable means to finding out 'what is happening'; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light. Robson, (in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997:78). This study can be regarded as exploratory as it aims to gain new insights into what adolescents think about peer counseling. The information gathered in this study will help determine properties for any further research on peer counseling. Emory and Cooper (in Saunders et al., 1997:78) suggest the following three ways for conducting exploratory research:

- A search of the literature;
- Talking to experts in the subjects;

➤ **Conducting focus group interviews.**

These suggestions will be implemented in this research.

2.3.1.3 Descriptive

The object of descriptive research is 'to portray an accurate profile of the persons, events or situations' according to (Robson in Saunders et al., 1997: 79). Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through words or pictures (Creswell, 1994:145). This study is descriptive as it aims to get adolescents' perceptions on peer counseling. According to Kvale (1983:175), the qualitative research interview aims at obtaining uninterpreted descriptions. The interviewee describes as precisely as possible what he experiences, feels as well as how he acts. Therefore it is imperative that the researcher has a clear picture of the phenomena on which he wishes to collect data prior to the collection of the data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill et al, 1997:79). The researcher will therefore facilitate the description of adolescents' perceptions on peer counseling by applying the principles of 'bracketing' and 'intuiting'.

➤ **Bracketing**

Burns and Grové (1987:80) explains that to bracket, the researcher suspends or lays aside what is known about the experience being studied. In this instance the researcher will get rid of any preconceived ideas of adolescents and peer counseling. To the degree that they are able to bracket their bias. The persons are trusted and more than anyone else, understands the inner world of the patient (Yalom, 1975:5). For the purpose of this study the therapist will be researcher and the patient the participants.

➤ Intuiting

Burns and Grové (1987:80) go on to explain that bracketing must have taken place before intuiting can occur. Intuiting is the process of actually "looking at" the phenomenon. The researcher will focus all her energy and awareness on what the adolescents have to say about peer counseling. The researcher will be absolutely absorbed and concentrate on what is being said.

2.3.1.4 Contextual

The main aim of this study is to get an understanding of adolescent's perceptions on peer counseling. It is thus imperative to *"... study people in their habitat or natural setting in order to understand the dynamics of human meanings as fully as possible"* Schurink (1998:281). The researcher will be interview participants at their school, as this is their natural setting.

2.4 RESEARCH METHOD

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The research will be conducted in two phases. Phase one is concerned with the exploration of adolescent's perceptions regarding peer counseling. Phase two will describe guidelines that should be used when implementing a peer counseling programme at secondary school level.

2.4.1 Phase one: Exploration and description of adolescent's perceptions regarding peer counseling in a secondary school in Gauteng.

The objective of the first phase of the research is to explore and describe adolescent's perceptions on peer counseling. The researcher aims to gather as much information as possible from the informants about their perceptions. In order to achieve the above aim of the researcher, a careful selection of participants will be made by adhering to the following criteria:

2.4.1.1 Sampling

According to Arkava and Lane (1983:27) a sample implies the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. A sample is studied in order to understand the population from which they come. According to Morse (1994:228) an informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study.

Furthermore adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 will form part of this sample. Adolescents at secondary school level will fall in this category. In the research the sample will be drawn from learners at a secondary school in Gauteng furthermore it is assumed that they will make good informants as they are trained as peer counselors.

➤ Sampling criteria

∴

The following criteria will be adhered to:



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- adolescents who have been exposed to peer counseling.
- adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 years.
- adolescents who attend a secondary school.
- adolescents who have agreed through a written consent to participate in the research.
- adolescents who have agreed that the focus group interview can be audio-taped and transcribed.

➤ Sampling method/selection of participants

The researcher will attempt to find out what adolescents' perceptions are on peer counseling by conducting focus group interviews. The researcher will make use of a

purposive sample method (Strydom & De Vos, 1998:198). According to Patton (1990:169) "... qualitative research requires that the data to be collected must be rich in description of people and places". The researcher will thus use purposive sampling methods by identifying access points and selecting especially informative subjects. (Schurink, 1998:253).

➤ Sample size

The researcher will be conducting focus group interviews. The sample size will be determined by data saturation. Saturation means that the researcher has done an exhaustive exploration of whatever phenomenon is being studied (Morse, 1994:106). This will be achieved when the researcher notes that various participants are repeating the same themes.

2.4.1.2 Data collection

The researcher will use different methods to collect data, such as interviewing, observation and field notes in order to collect data from the participants. According to Merriam (1998:120), the data collection is guided by questions, educated hunches, and emerging findings.

Interviews will be tape-recorded and behavioural observations from the participants observed will be written down. According to Patton, (1990:169), "...*qualitative research requires that the data be collected must be rich in description of people and places*".

➤ Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews are informal and used to explore in-depth a general area in which the researcher is interested (Saunders et al., 1997:212). According to (Schurink, 1998:30) the process of unstructured interviewing could be divided into five phases namely: -

- i) preparing for the interview;
- ii) becoming acquainted - The initial relationship;
- iii) establishing a contractual relationship;
- iv) establishing a relationship of trust and
- v) terminating the unstructured interview.

The researcher will prepare for the interview with the adolescents by “bracketing” (Kvale, 1983:184) all preconceived ideas and notions about adolescents’ perceptions of peer counseling and establishing whether it is a viable intervention strategy. The interviewer will strive to establish a cordial atmosphere in order to make the adolescents feel secure and thus free to speak. The contents should remain confidential between the stakeholders, that is the interviewer and the interviewee. If an interview is to be regarded as a “contract” between interviewer and interviewee, such a contract should benefit both parties. (Schurink, 1998:302-303).

There is no pre-determined list of questions to work through in this situation but the researcher should have a clear idea about what aspects are to be covered. (Saunders et al., 1997:121). The benefit for the interviewer in this study would be to obtain reliable data from the adolescents about their perceptions about peer counseling. The adolescents would benefit from this study by having an opportunity to contribute through their input into the development and implementation of a peer counseling programme at their respective schools that would cater for their needs. A trust relationship will be established when the interviewee feels informed about what the data will be used for and feels that the interviewer can be trusted. On termination of the interview the interviewee should not feel abandoned and exposed but instead feel that they have made a meaningful contribution to the development of a peer counseling programme for adolescents.

➤ Basic principles of unstructured interviews

The interviewer will treat the interviewee with respect and courtesy at all times (Schurink, 1998: 305-308). Every person has the need to be respected by other people.

interviewee despite their shortcomings and or problems. The researcher will be wary of becoming emotionally over-involved with the interviewees. The interviewer will endeavor not to make interviewees feel uncomfortable. The dignity of the interviewee will be respected, by keeping their identity and information confidential. The interviewer will not raise false expectations with the interviewees and will treat them with absolute honesty. The individualisation of every interviewee will be recognised by the interviewee and be regarded as paramount before the interview commences.

2.4.1.2.1 Face to face interviews

Interviewing could be regarded as the universal mode of systematic enquiry (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995:1). An in-depth face-to-face interviewing method (De Vos & Fouché, 1998:90) will be used as a means to qualify as well as quantify the research. This will assist the researcher to understand how adolescents view peer counseling as an intervention strategy. In this way the face-to-face interview helps us to understand the closed world of individuals, families, organisations, institutions and communities (Schurink, 1998:297). The purpose of the qualitative strategy is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1983:174). The researcher will pertinent ask questions and repeat the questions on the issues being discussed if the interviewee does not understand. The objective is to encourage the participants to elaborate.

The interviewer's contribution to the interview will be limited to an absolute minimum. The adolescents will be encouraged to speak freely in order to understand the innermost feelings, attitude, behaviour and experiences. The in-depth interview can be regarded as unstructured, because no questions are deliberately formulated; they develop spontaneously in the course of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Denzin (1978:6) states that the aim of unstructured interviewing is "to actively enter the worlds of people and to render those worlds understandable from the standpoint of a theory that is grounded in behaviours, language, definitions, attitudes and feelings of those studied".

standpoint of a theory that is grounded in behaviours, language, definitions, attitudes and feelings of those studied”.

➤ Pilot study

The pilot study offers the researcher the opportunity of testing the effectiveness of this sampling frame (Strydom, 1998:184). According to Merriam (1998:75), pilot interviews are crucial for trying out your questions. It gives the researcher an opportunity to test the viability of the choice of questions.

This approach conforms to the views held by Glesné and Peshkin, (1991:38), in that he says: ideally, pilot study participation should be drawn from your target population. A pilot study was conducted with a grade twelve learner at a secondary school in Gauteng who was trained as a peer counselor. The researcher met prior to the interview with the participant. An informal discussion was held in which the aims of the research was discussed. The participants were reassured about the confidentiality of the interviews, as well as the freedom the participant has to withdraw from the study at any given point.

Glesné and Peshkin, (1991:38) states that a pilot study is useful for testing many aspects of your proposed research. The pilot study prepares the researcher for gathering data (Glesné & Peshkin, 1991:39). From the pilot study the researcher felt that it would be more beneficial for this study to do focus group interviews with adolescents instead of doing face-to-face interviews. Therefore this assumption justifies the invaluable contribution of the pilot study to the research, because of this experience the researcher has decided to do focus group interviews instead of face-to-face interviews.

2.4.1.2.2 Focus group interviews

According to Steward and Shamdasani (1990:10) the term ‘interviews’ signifies the presence of a trained moderator who could skillfully facilitate the discussion that takes place between all the members in the group to elicit information on the desired topic.

'Focus' implies that the discussion that takes place in the group will be limited to the specific theme under investigation. A focus group interview could therefore be described as a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics taking place between eight to ten individuals with a similar background and common interest (Schurink et al., 1998:314). According to Morse (1994:225), focus groups provide insight into beliefs and attitudes that underlie behavior. As this study is about adolescent's perceptions on peer counseling, their opinions will be enriched through group interactions.

The perceptions and opinions of the adolescents on peer counseling will be stimulated through discussion which will consist of verbal and non-verbal communications (Okun, 1997:63). The focus group interviews will be conducted as an open conversation on peer counseling. All participants are encouraged to ask questions, make comments as well as respond to comments by others. The group will comprise of between six and ten participants Morse (1994:229) recommends that on optimal group sizes vary from five to twelve participants per session. The participants will be from a homogeneous group in that they are all adolescents who have been trained as peer counselors, from the same secondary school and all have been exposed to peer counseling.

These participants will be selected with the assistance of the educator and social worker who are in charge of the peer-counseling programme at the school.

The following procedures will be followed:

- interviews will be conducted at the school in a location that is free from outside distractions.
- the participants will be seated in a circle, to enable them to see each other.
- the participants will be made aware of the fact that the interview will be recorded prior to the interview.
- the issue of confidentiality will be discussed and the participants themselves will draw up group rules.

- the researcher will start with an opening question, in which the respondents state their age and grade.
- this will be followed with an introductory question, in which the topic of the discussion will be introduced, namely peer counseling. The transitional question would be, what is it like to be an adolescent today? This will serve as a linkage to the key questions. What is your perception on peer counseling? What type of counselor would you feel most comfortable to approach with your problems? The ending question will consist of a summary of what has been said. The entire interview will be ended with a final open-ended question, namely: "Is there anything you would like to add before we end".

a) Interviewing skills

Although the interviewer's participation in the interview process will be limited, it should not preclude her from being able to direct and control the interview. The following criteria would help in this process.

➤ *Facilitation*



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Facilitation involves creating an environment which is conducive to learning, experimentation, exploration and growth. It acts a means to enable people to discover how much knowledge they already have through a process of sharing, giving and receiving (Rooth, 1995:9).

Rooth (1995:9-4), mentions the following as basic strategies which are used in facilitation:

➤ *Managing time*

Facilitators have to pay attention to the time allocations set for the interview in order to manage the time effectively.

➤ *Ensuring a non-threatening environment*

In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to exploration and learning, growth and experimentation, it is imperative that the facilitator be non-threatening. Facilitators must be genuine, friendly and humorous and show that they are human.

➤ *Encouraging democracy*

The democratic rights must be respected and decisions concerning the interview should be made democratically. All methods used should be non-sexist, non-racial, non-violent and non-coercive.

➤ *Encouraging reflection*

Participants should be given opportunity to absorb, consolidate and transform their experiences in a meaningful way.

➤ *Listening skills*

The way you listen, and respond to another person is crucial for building a fulfilling relationship. It is imperative that the researcher spend time listening for details of what is been said (Johnson, 2000:152).

➤ *Questioning skills*

Questioning is an important skill that can be used to encourage people to discuss their ideas and perceptions. An open question will encourage others to answer at greater length and give more detail (Johnson, 2000:225). Open questions will allow

participants to define and describe a situation or event (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997:226). Questions need to be clearly phrased, so that the participants can understand them (Saunders et al., 1997:222).

➤ *Communication techniques*

Communication constitutes a vital part of the interviewing process, there would be no interview without it. The communication process in social research can be described as mutual interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Schurink, 1998:309). The interviewer will be aware of her own non-verbal responses as well as those of the interviewee. The interviewer will also take note of the non-verbal cues sent out by the interviewees such as gestures, expressions and posture.

➤ *Summarizing*

By summarizing, the researcher synthesizes what has been communicated during the interview and uses this as a means to highlight the major affective and cognitive themes (Okun, 1997:76).

➤ *Coping with conflict*

The interview will subtly avoid direct confrontation, should the interviewees show signs of aggression. The interviewees will be assured that the interviewer understands their aggressive attitude by listening to them attentively but remaining calm and neutral in this situation (Schurink, 1998:309).

➤ *Probing*

Probing is an open-ended attempt to obtain more information about something (Okun, 1997:75). Probing questions can be used to explore responses, which are of significance to the research topic, Saunders et al., (1997:226). Probing should always

give the interviewees the impression that their responses are rejected because they are incomplete. No value judgements will be expressed during probing. No positive or negative feelings will be conveyed through the interviewers behaviour. Open-ended questions will be asked; the interviewer will make use of tracking, clarifications of what is said and make use of reflective summaries (Schurink, 1998:310). Probing responses will help the researcher get a clear, definition of the issue being discussed (Johnson, 2000:233).

b) Observation and field notes

In the qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection. In order to do this unbiased the researcher will keep "... *detailed reproductions of what occurred*" (Schurink, 1998:285). According to Rooth (1995:9), all facilitators should keep a journal of their experiences to evaluate and reflect continuously on the process of facilitation. The same applies to the researcher who can be regarded as a facilitator of this research process. The researcher will also keep observational notes (see appendix) in order to give an account of what has happened. This written account of the observation constitutes field notes, which are analogous to the interview transcript (Merriam, 1998:104). The researcher will use theoretical notes which will enable the researcher to systematically derive meaning from some or all observation notes, these notes will be self-conscious. The researcher will also make use of methodological notes, which will be reminders, instructions and critical comments about observations noted.

Schurink (1998:285) holds the view that researchers should not rely solely on their memories regarding observations they make of participants, as it is possible to leave out vital information. Schurink further states that field notes are not merely summaries of events but rather detailed reproductions of what occurred. Furthermore, De Vos (1998:393) adds that researchers must design a way of observing events related to the phenomenon naturalistically, a method system for discovering the extent of the problem and detecting effects following the intervention.

Glesné and Peshkin, (1991:49) are of the opinion that the researcher will pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues sent out by participants, namely voice, tone gestures and movements. The field notebook or field log is the primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973:99-101) has developed a model, which considers all the prerequisites of note taking. The model consists of three elements, namely observational notes, theoretical notes, methodological notes and personal notes.

i) Observational notes

Observational notes explains what has happened. They describe the events taking place through watching and listening (Schurink, 1998:285).

ii) Theoretical notes



Theoretical notes are self-conscious, systematic attempts by the researcher to derive meaning from some or all-observational notes (Schurink, 1998:286).

iii) Methodological notes

These notes are reminders, instructions and critical comments that the researcher makes for personal consumption, (Schurink, 1998:285).

iv) Personal notes

These notes are about one's own reactions, reflections as well as experiences about the focus group interviews.

2.4.1.3 Data analysis

Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that the researcher can make sense of what you have learned (Glesné & Peshkin, 1999:130). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:229), the analysis of data begins shortly after the data selection commences and continues during data collection and beyond. In analyzing the data, the researcher will make use of Tesch's eight steps (Creswell, 1994:155) to reduce the information into themes and categories, namely "adolescents perceptions on peer counseling". These eight steps help the researcher to analyse the textual data in a systematic process. The reduction may according to Kvale (1983:184), be viewed as bracketing ("an attempt to place the common sense and scientific foreknowledge about the phenomena into parentheses in order to arrive at the essence of the phenomena.") The following steps will be followed in order to analyse the data:

- The researcher will read through the interview transcriptions carefully thereafter pick one randomly read it.
- After reading through individual interviews the researcher will cluster together similar topics.
- Codes will be written for each topic.
- Suitable headings for each topic will be given and the topics will be transformed into categories.
- Topics that relate to one another are grouped together.
- The data that follow under the same topic will be grouped together (Creswell, 1994:155).

An independent coder who is knowledgeable in research methodology as well as the qualitative research process will also follow the same procedure when analyzing the data. A consensus discussion will be held in order to formulate categories and sub-categories. See appendix for the protocol of the independent coder.

2.4.1.4 Literature Control

The results of the research will be checked against existing literature on the topics highlighted. Conducting a literature control is of the utmost importance. The main purpose of doing a literature review is to show the reader how your study supplements work that has already been done on your topic according to (Saunders et al., 1997:375). Thus the researcher should take into consideration all previous work conducted in the same field. Le Compt and Preissie (1993:272) refers to literature control as "theoretical application". They further go on to say that *"it involves a systematic search for studies or analytical frames that fit the data more abstractly or generally"*. This allows the researcher to locate the universal implications of the idiosyncratic case.

According to Merriam (1998:55) a literature review is a narrative essay that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques the important thinking and research of a particular topic thus the analysed data is compared to the literature to verify the findings. This would subsequently involve the systematic search for literature that fits the collected data. With this the researcher will be able to discover the universal implications of the findings.

2.5. PHASE TWO: DESCRIPTION OF GUIDELINES THAT COULD BE USED WHEN IMPLEMENTING A PEER-COUNSELING PROGRAMME AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL.

The objectives of phase two are to describe guidelines that secondary schools can use when implementing a peer-counseling programme at their respective schools. After analysing the results of Phase One, literature will further be reviewed to formulate effective guidelines.

2.5.1. Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Guba's model of trustworthiness (Schurink et al., 1998:331) would be applied to enhance trustworthiness of this research. The four criteria for trustworthiness are truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

2.5.1.1. Truth-value (Credibility)

Credibility refers to the 'truth', 'value' or believability of the findings, Morse (1994:105). Truth-value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects and the content in which the research was undertaken (Schurink et al., 1998:331). It establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informant and context (Krefting, 1991:215). Krefting continues by stating that truth-value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants. In this research human experience will refer to the adolescents perceptions on the implementation of a peer counseling support programme at their respective schools. Truth-value is subject orientated and is ensured by the strategy of credibility to (Krefting, 1991:215). The objectives of this is to demonstrate that the research was conducted to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. It is also credible when it presents such accurate description or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the description (Krefting, 1991:216). Krefting further states that truth-value is a criterion for the evaluation of qualitative research. See table 2.1. for application to this research.

2.5.1.2 Applicability (Transferability)

Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups thus it is the ability to generalise from the findings to

larger populations. In the qualitative perspective, applicability refers to how well the threats to external validity have been managed (Krefting, 1991:216). The aim of this research is to get adolescents' perceptions of peer counseling as an effective intervention strategy. The information gathered would help to develop a peer-counseling programme for South African secondary schools that would meet the need of adolescents. See table 2.1. for application of this research.

2.5.1.3 Consistency (Dependability)

The third criterion of trustworthiness considers the consistency of the data, that is, whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context (Krefting, 1991:216). It is the extent to which repeated administration of a measure will provide the same data or the extent to which a measure administered once, but by different people, produce equivalent results (Poggenpoel, 1998:350). According to Krefting (1991:216), consistency is defined in terms of dependability.

2.5.1.4 Neutrality (Confirmability)

The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is neutrality, which refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives. Confirmability is the strategy used to ensure neutrality. Confirmability means obtaining direct and often repeated affirmation of what the researcher has heard, Morse (1994:105).

Neutrality is achieved when truth-value and applicability are established (Krefting, 1991:216-217). Adhering to the following criteria attains confirmability in the use of audio-visual methods of research: confirmability audit, triangulation and reflexivity by the researcher using field notes (Schurink et al., 1998:331).

Table 2.1
Strategies to ensure trustworthiness

Strategy	Criteria	Application
Credibility	<i>Prolonged and varied field experience</i>	According to Krefting (1991:217) the researcher needs to spend an extended amount of time with the informants, this will allow the researcher to check perspectives and this will also allow the informants to become better acquainted with the researcher. This will also help the researcher discover any hidden facts from the participants. The researcher will in this instance spend most of her time with the adolescents participating in the study.
	<i>Reflexivity</i>	The researchers own background, interests and perceptions as well as the researcher's interests in the research process and the assessment of these influences are known as reflexivity. The qualitative researcher is part of the research and not separated from it, thus making this approach reflexive. Krefting (1991:218) states that the researcher is a participant and not merely an observer in the research process. Therefore the researcher must analyse him or herself within the context of the research.
	<i>Triangulation</i>	This strategy is used to enhance the quality of the research, especially credibility (Krefting, 1991:219). Triangulation of the data method will be achieved by conducting interviews with adolescents who have been trained as peer counselors as well as observing them during the interview session. Adolescents will be purposively selected from different schools, cultural and religious backgrounds to achieve data triangulation. Theoretical triangulation will be achieved by using Erikson's theory. De Vos (1998:359) mentions different types of triangulation. The researcher will achieve these types in the following way.

	<p><i>Member checking</i></p> <p><i>Peer examination</i></p> <p><i>Interviewing techniques</i></p> <p><i>Authority of researcher</i></p>	<p>Member checking will be done by giving the adolescents an opportunity to read through the transcription of the tape-recorded interviews. This will ensure that they have a chance to clarify any misinterpretations made by the researcher.</p> <p>According to Krefling (1991:219), peer examination involves the researcher's discussing the research process and findings with an impartial colleague who has experience with the qualitative method of research. Peer examination keeps the researcher to be honest with the findings and to analyse deeper. The peer would increase credibility of the study by checking categories that have developed out of the data gathering.</p> <p>The researcher would enhance credibility by repeating, reframing and expanding the questions. The researcher would explain in congruencies within the research study. In this regard, I will explain if what is researched differs to what is written (Krefling, 1991:220).</p> <p>According to Krefling (1991:220) the essence of the credibility issue is the unique authority of the researcher, the "I was there" element. The researcher becomes the measurement tool, that is, he will report what he has personally investigated and not what he has heard from others. The researcher must be familiar with the phenomenon and the setting under study. The researcher must have a strong conceptual and theoretical knowledge of qualitative data and must be good in investigation.</p>
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Transferability	<p><i>Nominated sampling</i></p> <p><i>Dense description</i></p>	<p>A key factor in the transferability of data is the representativeness of informants for that particular group (Krefting, 1991:220). The informants in this instance will be learners who have been trained as peer counselors. Purposive sampling. Describing the demographics.</p> <p>A dense description of the research will be provided by including the research design and methodology, a Direct quote from participants, literature control and data analysis.</p>
Neutrality	<p><i>Confirmability audit</i></p> <p><i>Triangulation</i></p> <p><i>Reflexivity</i></p>	<p>Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:221) identified the following categories that can be used to establish an audit trail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Raw data: field notes and transcriptions ➤ Data reconstruction and synthesis products: thematic categories and interpretations. ➤ Process notes: design ➤ Strategies, trustworthiness ➤ Materials related to intentions and dispositions: field notes ➤ Instrument development information: pilot study <p>This strategy is used to enhance the quality of the research, especially credibility (Krefting, 1991:219). Triangulation of the data method will be achieved by conducting interviews with adolescents who have been trained as peer counselors as well as observing them during the interview session. Adolescents will be purposively selected from different schools, cultural and religious backgrounds to achieve data triangulation. Theoretical triangulation will be achieved by using Erikson's theory. De Vos (1998:359) mentions different types of triangulation. The researcher will achieve these types in the following way.</p> <p>The researchers own background, interests and perceptions as well as the researcher's interests in the research process and the assessment of these influences</p>

		<p>are known as reflexivity. The qualitative researcher is part of the research and not separated from it, thus making this approach reflexive. Krefting (1991:218) states that the researcher is a participant and not merely an observer in the research process. Therefore the researcher must analyse him or herself within the context of the research.</p> <p><i>Code-recode procedures</i></p> <p>A consensus discussion with an independent external coder will be held after the data has been analysed.</p>
Dependability	<p><i>Audit trail</i></p> <p><i>Triangulation</i></p> <p><i>Peer examination</i></p>	<p>Guba (in Krefting, 1991:221) used the term auditable to describe the situation in which another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by the investigator in the study. This was done by the help of an independent coder.</p> <p>This strategy is used to enhance the quality of the research, especially credibility (Krefting, 1991:219). Triangulation of the data method will be achieved by conducting interviews with adolescents who have been trained as peer counselors as well as observing them during the interview session. Adolescents will be purposively selected from different schools, cultural and religious backgrounds to achieve data triangulation. Theoretical triangulation will be achieved by using Erikson's theory. De Vos (1998:359) mentions different types of triangulation. The researcher will achieve these types in the following way.</p> <p>According to Krefting (1991:219) peer examination involves the researcher's discussing the research process and findings with an impartial colleague who has experience with the qualitative method of research. Peer examination keeps the researcher to be honest with the findings and to analyse deeper. The peer would increase credibility of the study by checking categories that have developed out of the data gathering.</p>

2.6 ETHICAL MEASURE

The ethical measures have been discussed in Chapter one. These measures will serve as a guideline for the researcher and will help prevent the participants being abused by the researcher.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the characteristics of the qualitative research process that has been discussed as well as how the researchers uses it to conceptualize adolescents perceptions on peer counseling. This chapter further serves a guide for the researcher when conducting the focus group interviews. The researcher will select adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 from a secondary school in Gauteng to conduct focus group interviews with. All participants who participated in this study will have been exposed to peer counseling either through training as peer counselors or interaction with peer counselors.



CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS: CROSS VALIDATION REPORT AND LITERATURE CONTROL

You are the same today as you will be five years from now except for two things: the people with whom you associate and the books you read. Charles Jones (in Mc Quirk, 2002:24)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is designed to explore and describe the perceptions of adolescents who have been trained as peer counseling in a secondary school in Gauteng. The peer-counseling programme was initiated at this school because one of the learners committed suicide in the school's boarding house. The school subsequently was of the opinion that there was a need to place a mechanism in place to support learners who have problems.

The second phase of the research will provide guidelines for educators, which they could use when implementing a peer-counseling programme at secondary school level. The researcher will make use of various literature and resources in order to validate the results from the data collected.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews were conducted with two groups of adolescents who have been trained as peer counselors. They were selected on the bases that they have exposure and or experience in peer counseling, thus they are able to contribute a rich description (Patton, 1990:169) of their "lived experiences" (White & Epston, 1990:9) to the study at hand.

Focus group interviews were conducted after school hours, during the learner's extra mural activities. The reason for this was that during this time the peer counselors met either for training or to plan activities that they arranged for the school. The interviews took place over a period of two months, this is due to the fact that there were only two groups of adolescents trained at the school as peer counselors.

The researcher was unable to achieve data saturation from interviewing each group once only. Subsequently the researcher had to re-interview both groups. This was done by explaining the themes which were identified from the first two interviews to each group individually and asking them to elaborate more on these topics or to add on anything that they might have left out. Thus all in all four interviews were conducted with the two groups of peer counselors.

The first focus group consisted of eight participants and the second group of ten participants. The groups consisted of girls and boys mixed between the ages of 15 and 17 years. These participants are from an urban school in Gauteng. This school was previously a private school that specifically catered for learners from a disadvantaged background who could be regarded as above average. The researcher kept field notes, which would assist in the process of triangulation. The use of field note is described in more detail in chapter two.

The "open coding method" of Tesch (Creswell, 1994:155) was used to analyze the data collected from the interview as discussed in Chapter two.

3.2.1 RESULTS

The interviews were tape recorded and thereafter transcribed. The researcher and an independent coder analysed the transcribed data independently. Thereafter, through a consensus discussion with an independent coder about the transcribed information, the data was divided into categories and subcategories.

3.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS: CROSS VALIDATION REPORT AND LITERATURE CONTROL

3.3.1 Major themes (central storyline)

Peer counseling is viewed in a paradoxical way. On the one hand it emerged as an intervention creating hope related to a view that peer counseling facilitates growth (intra- and interpersonal) and has the potential to make a difference. On the other hand however, a negative perception emerged. Peer counseling is viewed as under-utilised due to factors hindering utilisation thereof such as distrust and stigmatization. See Table 3.1. for basis of discussion of results.

Table 3.1. An overview of major categories and themes as described by adolescents at secondary school level regarding their perceptions on peer counseling.

Category	Sub-category
3.3.2 A viewpoint of peer counseling as a way of caring for and assisting yourself and others –“making a difference”	<p>3.3.2.1 Adolescents view peer counseling as a process facilitating growth (intra- and interpersonal) on different levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Friends/peers ➤ Community <p>3.3.2.2 Adolescents view peer counselors as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Role models ➤ “Being there for others” ➤ “Teenage psychologists”

<p>3.3.3 A “stigmatised view” of peer counseling</p>	<p>3.3.3.1 Adolescents view peer counseling as not being fully utilised due to the following factors hindering the utilisation thereof:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of trust ➤ Peer counseling being a foreign or new concept ➤ Negative attitude towards peer counselors ➤ Inadequate skills of peer counselors ➤ Peer counselors experience emotional discomfort reflected by feelings of helplessness, insecurity, fear of failure and disappointment.
<p>3.3.4 A viewpoint that necessary structures should be put in place with the objective to support peer counseling through recommendations and suggestions.</p>	<p>3.3.4.1 Adolescents recommend the following practices to improve the utilisation of peer counseling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adequate ongoing training (Workshop) ➤ Increasing peer counselors visibility and availability, as well as creating an realistic view ➤ Obtaining support from all role players and inviting all stakeholders to participate

This research is structured in two phases:

- The first phase will be to explore and describe adolescent's perceptions regarding peer counseling in a secondary school in Gauteng.
- The second phase entails the description of guidelines for educators that could be used when implementing a peer-counseling programme at secondary school level.

3.3.2 Phase One: Exploration and description of adolescents' perceptions regarding peer counseling in a secondary school in Gauteng.

The following information that was gathered from the participants refers to what their perceptions are about peer counseling.

3.3.2.1 Category 1: A viewpoint of peer counseling as a way of caring for and assisting yourself and others –“making a difference”

Peer counseling training programmes are viewed as beneficial in assisting peer counselors to look at the world in a more integrated way through learning more about themselves and the community they live in. According to the interviewees: *"When you actually look... you get to learn a lot of different things, about yourself..."* According to the peer counselors, peer counseling gives them an opportunity to assist others and through that they improve themselves and in this way they are able to make a difference in the lives of their peers. *"I think by helping someone else you boost your own self esteem..."*

This way of assisting others and themselves is further reflected in the following statements that the interviewees have made. *"Peer counseling is a learning experience...a way that you can help others..."* and *"... you are helping yourself and others."* One peer counselor goes on to say that: *"... I found out what kind of person I really am..."* Thus peer counseling has assisted the peer counselors in self-discovery.

Muuss (1990:8) echoes this view by stating that by being useful to others, adolescents can build a more durable basis for self-esteem.

The value of peer counseling relates to the attitude of the peer counselor, *"That you are on the same level, that you have an understanding and once they know who you are, and what you are all about, they can open up and talk to you"*. According to McCandless and Coop, (1979:275), adolescents relationships help build models for the youth in search of his or her identity. This reiterates what the peer counselors are saying with regard to how much their training has helped them to discover more about themselves as well as how their interaction with their peers exposed them to what skills they possess or need to develop in order to be effective as peer counselors. This view is substantiated by (Cowie & Wallace, 2000:159), who conducted interviews with nine schools in the United Kingdom where he implemented a peer support programme. This view is amplified by these interviews, for the majority of the peer helpers reported that there were great personal benefits for them through their involvement in this programme. Some of the benefits that they reported was an increase in self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and a belief that they were contributing positively to the life of the school community.

3.3.2.1.a Adolescents view peer counseling as a process facilitating growth (intra- and interpersonal) on different levels:

i) Friends/peers

Peer counselors view peer counseling as a way of being there for their friends, *"I thought that will be a great way of how to educate yourself on how to help your friends"*. Peer counselors' view of friends is, *"... your friend is the person you trust."* They have indicated that: *"... at times you find that students just need a friend ..."*, they see themselves as that friend.

Goleman (1995:243) holds the view that children learn social skills in their peer relations thus peer counselors can be viewed as "kids" that assist others in developing their social

skills in terms of forming friendships with each other. This view of friendship is further supported by Yalom (1975:29), who states: *"a freely interactive group, with few structural restrictions, will, in time, develop into social microcosm of the participant members"*. Peer counselors can be regarded as an interactive group that can be freely used by any learner at the school who chooses to.

ii) Community

The peer counselors have identified being there for their friends as a way of assisting the broader community when they say, *"But I think by helping my friends I am helping the broader community..."*

They also view peer counseling in terms of: *"helping the community directly, if it helps you, it will help our friends..."* Thus it should be seen as a process of helping yourself first, thereafter your friends and later the broader community.

They realise that the effect of peer counseling is limited: *"You can't go out and save the whole world, you can save a few people..."*, which shows that they have a realistic view about what is achievable as peer counselors.

Tanaka and Reid (1997:30) state that in addition to helping individual students peer helpers- as leaders and influential students can improve the school climate, contributing to its health and security in several ways. This can be regarded as one of the aims of peer counseling.

3.3.2.2.b Adolescents view peer counselors as:

i) Role models

In order to make a difference in their school community peer counselors feel that they should act as role models to the rest of the school. The manner in which they present

themselves will assists in building a trusting relationship with their peers: "... we have to present ourselves in the best manner...it depends on your image. You must be very self-aware". The value of peer counseling is related to the attitude of the peer counselor: "...that you can have an understanding... and she opens up..."

They view their image as crucial to making peer counseling a successful intervention strategy: "I think that we as peer counselors should be vigilant in the way we carry ourselves..."

According to Muuss (1990:8), the peer leaders are trained by experienced personnel to guide junior-high school students in working out strategies for resisting destructive social pressure. In this instance "destructive social pressure" can be viewed as any activity that will allow students to develop negative perceptions of the peer counselors.

ii) "Being there for others"

The peer counselors see themselves as "...being there for others...". They feel that a peer counselor is there to offer: "...an ear to listen to so you do not need a best friend." In the views of the peer counselors, by listening: "... to the person and give them some attention, it is going to help them in their life in some way." They also see themselves as: "... problem solvers...". One particular promising intervention strategy centers on peer-mediated approaches. Small groups of adolescents can come to understand essential features of human biology and behaviour, namely how to communicate on vital but touchy subjects, and how to understand crucial evidence of the relationship between high-risk behaviour and disease and disability. (Muuss, 1990:8) holds the opinion that this counseling tends to be helpful both to those who give it and to those who receive it.

iii) "Teenage psychologists"

Peer counselors viewed themselves as "teenage psychologists" this is derived from the following statement made by one of the peer counselors: *"I thought peer counselors are like teenagers psychologists... you are there and people approach you ..."*

It is not the sheer process of ventilation that is important, it is not only the discovery of others' problems similar to our own and the ensuing disconfirmation of our wretched uniqueness that is important; it is the affective sharing of one's inner world and then the acceptance by others that seems of paramount importance (Yalom, 1975:47). This statement made by Yalom (1975:47) emphasizes how much more depth group counseling or interactions hold. The same would apply to peer counseling. The peer counselors have realised that they are not "teenage psychologist" but instead peer counseling has given them an opportunity to learn more about themselves and in that way they are able to assist their school community.

3.3.3 Category 2: A "stigmatized view" of peer counseling

A stigmatised view of peer counseling causes those who ask for support or assistance from the peer counselors to hold the view too. *"I think that they have this stigmatized view of peer counselors...people have this stigma about counseling."* This view is critical for it can be linked to the lack of trust that adolescents have in peer counseling.

3.3.3.1 Adolescents view peer counseling as not being fully utilized related to factors hindering the utilization thereof:

The participants are of the opinion that peer counseling is not being fully utilised at their school due to the following factors.

i) Lack of trust

One of the greatest problems affecting peer counseling is the fact that the peer counselors are not trusted by their peer: *"Trust is the main thing... they'll feel threatened, like maybe you'll go and tell someone else."* This view is supported by Goleman, (1995:123) who states that because of the danger of being told, either explicitly or implicitly, "We hate you", all children are understandably cautious on the threshold of approaching a group. This is the same concern that learners at this school are faced with when considering approaching the peer counselors, especially as this particular school is a small one. Peer counselors are not trusted because: *"...the negative thing that most, like some adolescents will probably will feel, you want to be a peer counselor to hear everyone's business"* and *"...they won't trust that a person of my age could actually help them."*

Furthermore they continue by stating that: *"...people's biggest fear is being judged."* This can be linked to the stigmatized view of peer counselor being viewed as "teenage psychologists".

According to McCandless and Coop (1979:264,265) youths rejected by groups they want to join may undergo a crisis, this is because peer groups provide their members with a social life, those rejected will be denied not only support but also the day-to-day social contact of their peers. Harris (1995:463) supports this view for he states: "if one group rejects a youth, other groups may not want to have such an undesirable." Members of a group prefer their own group to other groups. This is relevant and prevalent to this particular school because it is a small school and *"... everyone knows everyone..."* The experiences of the peer counselors illustrate that experience is a plus, but trustworthiness can be even more important. According to Priester and Petty (in Weiten, 2001:673), many people tend to accept messages from a trustworthy source with little scrutiny. The peer counselors stipulated that they have not yet attained this level in peer counseling at their school.

ii) Peer counseling being a foreign or new concept

The interviewees had the following to say:

- Peer counseling is viewed as: *"...a really new concept, peer counseling and a lot of people are really not use to it and they don't know what to expect."*
- Due to the fact that: *"... peer counseling is a new concept at this school...the whole school in general is very ignorant towards peer counseling."*
- Coupled to this being a new concept at this school, peer counseling is accompanied by: *"... misperceptions about what peer counseling is".*
- One interviewee stated that: *"One student actually said that no matter what happens, I don't have a psychological problem, I don't need a person my age to tell me what to do with my life."* Thus the perception created is that peer counseling is being stereotyped: *"...because you go to a therapist... you are crazy...a psycho..."* Thus people who make use of the peer counselors will be perceived as "crazy". This further reinforces the view that a certain stigma is attached to peer counseling.

Snyder, Hill and Derksen (*in* Parham & Tinsley, 1980:51) suggests the possibility that potential clients fear being seen in the physical proximity of a university counseling facility because of the possible stigma of being identified as emotionally unstable. The last thing an adolescent wants is to be labeled as "crazy". As this is a stage in development that the adolescent's body image is linked to his self-esteem and also determined by his experience of how other people perceive him according to (Padin, Lerner and Spiro *in* Louw, 1995:387). Due to the fact that peer counseling is accompanied with a stigmatized view and being a new concept at this particular school, adolescents are finding it difficult to make use of it.

iii) Negative attitude towards peer counselors

Linked to peer counseling being a new concept it is accompanied with a lot of negative perceptions by adolescents: *"I think that a lot of students don't take this whole peer counseling thing serious... this whole thing is basically just a joke. Nothing has been taken seriously."*

"We are availing ourselves to them ... they don't know how professional this is..." and because of this they are not making use of this service provided by the peer counselors.

These negative perceptions do not only come from the learners but also the entire school community according to the interviewees who stated: *"... headmaster and staff should take us more seriously..."*

The peer counselors feel that *"...what makes our job as peer counselors very difficult because you get people that actually, there is a whole lot of mob psychology and the people who instigate are, lets do this, lets bring them down, will bring them down..."*

This viewpoint expressed by the peer counselors is reinforced by Rosenbaun, (1994:6) when he states that adolescents need to experience a non-judgmental culture where they can freely express and experiment with the process of self-differentiation. This environment seems no to be non-judgemental. According to Jones, (1980:15), peer interaction is discouraged at schools and instead learners are asked to compete with their peer rather than working together. This contributes to the negative perceptions peers have about each other. They don't see themselves in a position to be there to assist and support each other.

iv) Inadequate skills of peer counselors

The peer counselors are of the opinion that the skills that they have acquired has not been adequate in order to be effective in their tasks as peer counselors: *"I'd feel more*

comfortable if I had proper training...more training... " The peer counselors also feel that they: *... don't know how to approach them...* " them referring to their fellow mates, this re-emphasizes the fact that more training is required for the peer counselors. Coetzee (1999:41) says that one of the skills that peer counselors should acquire is active listening skills, which in turn will promote the development of empathy and trust amongst the peers. Due to the lack of trust from their peers, one is inclined to think that these peer counselors still need to develop more skills.

- v) Peer counselors experience emotional discomfort reflected by feelings of helplessness, insecurity, fear of failure & disappointment

These learners have volunteered to be peer counselors with the expectation of *"...helping..."* their peers but because of the lack of trust their services have not been used by their peers and this causes a feeling of helplessness, insecurity, fear of failure and disappointment on the side of the peer counselors. *"I just don't see anyone making use of the peer counseling in this school."* The peer counselors are afraid that if they try to approach learners at the school to offer assistance that: *"... they'll just push me aside..."*. These peer counselors are experiencing a loss of hope and fear failure and disappointment.

It is important to the peer counselors that they feel worthwhile and needed, this is expressed clearly when they say: *"... they are not finding it easy to approach us, though we are trying our best to break the ice..."* Muuss (1990:8) supports this view by stating that the long-term effects of peer counseling may be more important for the peer leaders than the youngsters counseled. All people experience a need to be seen as valued and liked by other (Jones, 1980:5) and peer counselors are no exception. Erikson (in Jones, 1980:5) states that the major developmental task of late adolescence centres around establishing mutual satisfying personal relationships. This has not been the case with these peer counselors and the learners at this particular school.

Externalizing of the problem enables the problem to become a separate entity and thus external to the person or relationship that was ascribed as the problem, (White & Epston, 1990:38). The peer counselors are feeling disappointed, insecure and helpless because no one is making use of their services. They should learn to externalize the problem in order to alleviate these feelings. The problem is that their peers do not trust them and this in turn makes them feel incompetent.

3.3.4. Phase Two: Description of guidelines that could be used by educators when implementing a peer-counseling programme at secondary school level.

3.3.4.1 Category 3: A viewpoint that necessary structures should be put in place to support peer counseling (recommendations/suggestions)

Peer counselors recommended the following practices to improve utilization of peer counseling at their school:

i) Adequate ongoing training (Workshop)

The peer counselors are of the opinion that they have forgotten the skills they acquired and need to have a refresher course or have the information that they have learnt placed in a "...booklet..." the purpose of the booklet is to act as a source of reference. They further stated that: *"... most of us here forgot how to handle a patient... one needs to go through the lessons again... just a summary... because I forgot everything... I forgot my skills... and that won't be very helpful"*. There is some evidence that a key element is the quality supervision provided to the peer counselors (Muuss, 1990:8). It is obvious from the above statement made by one of the peer counselors that they need on going supervision and up grading of their skills. This view is further supported by Gilhooly and Scheuch (2000:56) who states that it is most beneficial to meet with mediators on a regular basis as this gives them time to practice their skills. This will also give them a chance to discuss any unique problems or situations which could have risen.

ii) Increasing peer counselors visibility and availability, as well as creating an realistic view

The peer counselors are of the opinion that because of the fact that peer counseling is a new concept that they should: "... have a workshop about it to show what peer counseling is all about for the whole school" to "... emphasise what peer counselors are doing, what their jobs are." This will give them "... more exposure." for example to celebrate peer counseling through a "... peer-counseling day."

They are of the opinion that they need to explain to the school what peer counseling is, introduce the peer counselors to others: "... we need to be more visible in the school..." and explain the role of the peer counselors "...what they all about..." The peer counselors suggested the they should have a talk to the learners at the school to help familiarize them with what peer counseling is all about. They felt that one way of doing this is that: "the peer counselors take charge of chapel service... basically just talk to the students... so they can also get more familiar with peer counseling..."

In terms of visibility, Kinkartz, Quelch and Berezowsky, (1994:2) suggest that a private, secure space is an effective way to increase the availability and visibility of the peer counselors. In that way, everyone at the school would know where to find the peer counselors and at which times they will be available.

iii) Obtaining support from all role players/inviting all stakeholders to participate

The peer counselors are of the opinion that: "...what will make their job easier is that they have a strong support system that is getting teachers involved, getting the headmaster involved...because it is like teachers they don't actually acknowledge that we are there..."

They are of the opinion that: "... everybody should unite and actually work together to have something prosperous out of this." They have realized that there is a need to: "... first develop a relationship with the school." This view is supported by Gilhooley and Scheuch (2000:3) who states that for peer mediation to be successful within the school, it is imperative that administration and staff have a clear understanding of the process and how it enhances academic performance and decreases disruptions.

Factors affecting success according to Kinkartz et al., (1994:2) are the backing of school staff that are important and can make participants feel comfortable and committed to the process.

3.4 SUMMARY

From the interviews conducted with the participants it can be stated that there are positive and negative aspects relating to peer counseling. The participants felt they can make a difference in the lives of their peers and the community at large. They also felt that peer counseling has made a significant contribution to their personal development. Furthermore they felt that the service that they wish to provide to the school and their peers are not being fully utilized due to the lack of trust from the side of their peers. This lack of trust is due to that fact that peer counseling is a new concept that has been introduced into their school which has a stigma attached to it. This causes them to experience an emotional discomfort and is reflected in their feelings of helplessness and insecurity which is coupled with the fear of failure and feelings of disappointment.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The participants have made extensive recommendations about how to improve peer counseling at their school. These recommendations will be used to formulate guidelines that can be used by schools when implementing peer counseling. This will be further discussed in chapter four.

The following poem brings together the entire concept of peer counseling.

First and foremost, I will remain faithful
always to my God.

I will not underestimate the power of family unity.
I will not neglect a true friend, but I will set aside
time for myself as well.

I will cross my bridges as I come to them
(divide and conquer).

I will begin all challenges with optimism,
rather than doubt.

I will always maintain a positive self-image
And high self-esteem, knowing that all my intentions begin
with self-evaluation.

A teen named Beth Haire (in Covey, 1998:81)

CHAPTER 4

OVERVIEW, GUIDELINES, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It's what you learn after you know it all that counts. (John Wooden in Mc Quirk, 2002:37).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to provide an overview of the study with reference to the background, problem statement and aim of the research. Guidelines and recommendations will be given to assist educators in implementing a peer-counseling programme at a secondary school level. The limitations of the study will also be provided.

4.2 RATIONALE, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND AIM OF THE STUDY

During early adolescents, as the individual becomes disaffected from the family, the peer group emerges as an emotional anchorage, an experiential educator of socialised attitudes and behaviours Hurlock (in Tedesco & Gaier, 1988:127). The peer group starts to play a vital role in the life of adolescents.

According to Coleman, (1974:107), the popular image of adolescents often include notions of excessive dependence upon the clique or gang, a slavish following of fad and fashion, and a tendency to easily be "led astray" by the more powerful members of the group.

Based on this the researcher was interested in discovering what impact a peer counseling programme, as an intervention strategy to assist adolescents to cope with during this

phase of development which is characterised by change would have on them. This research was conducted specifically to attain adolescent's perceptions on peer counseling.

The questions posed by the researcher were whether peer counseling could be regarded as a workable intervention strategy to assist adolescents in South Africa?

The following research questions were therefore be generated:

- What are the perceptions of adolescents about peer counseling, who have been exposed it?
- What guidelines can be formulated for implementing peer counseling at school s?

The information gathered in this study will be used as background information for implementing a peer counseling support programme in a specific school in Gauteng.

The purpose of the study is to:

- To explore and describe the perceptions of adolescents who have been exposed to peer counseling at their school in Gauteng.
- To describe guidelines for educators who are implementing peer counseling at secondary schools in Gauteng.

4.3 RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

In order to achieve the research aims the researcher has made use of a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design.

The data was collected by doing focus group interviews with two groups of peer counselors, field notes were kept throughout the interview process.

The following strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness of the study:

- Truth value
- Applicability
- Consistency
- Neutrality

These strategies have been discussed in chapter two.

The researcher also adhered to ethical measures by getting consent from the principal of the school as well as the participants and their parents to participate in the research. Discussions were also held with the educator who is responsible for the peer-counseling programme at the school as well as the social worker who conducted the training with the peer-counseling participants.

Interviews were conducted with the participants and tape recorded. The transcribed data was discussed with an independent coder in order to identify categories. After a consensus discussion with the independent coder these categories were mutually agreed upon. The categories are as follows:

- A viewpoint of peer counseling as a way of caring for and assisting yourself and others –“making a difference”
- A “stigmatised view” of peer counseling
- A viewpoint that necessary structures should be put in place to support peer counseling (recommendations/suggestions)

The analysed data was discussed in chapter three and quotes were provided to substantiate the categories. The peer counselors have made numerous recommendations on how to improve peer counseling at their school.

4.4 GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER WHEN IMPLEMENTING A PEER COUNSELING PROGRAMME

The recommendations made by the peer counselors are based on how they can improve peer counseling at their school. The researcher holds the view that these recommendations should serve as guidelines for secondary schools wishing to implement peer counseling. From the interviews conducted with the two groups of peer counselors they made a lot of recommendations of how to improve peer counseling at their school.

The peer counselors are of the opinion that their services were not being used because their peers did not trust them. They suggested that they should be working hand in hand with the SRC (Student Representative Council) and not as an isolated entity, which is how they believe they are functioning currently. They have also suggested that peer counselors be nominated per grade, as it will be easier for learners to speak to peer-counselors who are in the same grade as they are. The following should be used as guidelines when implementing peer counseling at secondary school level:

4.4.1 The right people for the job

Cowie and Wallace, (2000:65) state that, having the 'right' people for the job is important to any services. Peer counseling is no exception. Peer counselors should be selected from the broader school community. According to Tanaka and Reid, (1997:30), "peer helpers should represent the entire student body", they are the best judge of whether students are representative is, their peers. If their peers select them they will be more inclined to trust them more and make use of the service they provide more frequently. Gilhooley and Scheuch, (2000:53) are of the opinion that it is very important that a diverse population of the student body be chosen in order for the programme to be successful.

4.4.2 Selection criteria

According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:192) potential student counselors need to be carefully selected. A selection criterion should be established when choosing peer counselors. Cowie and Wallace (2000:65) state the following three methods for selecting peer counselors:

- recruiting volunteers;
- peer nomination;
- adult/teacher nomination.

One is inclined to think that they are not trusted because they are not supported by the school community for they were selected by their peers; instead are volunteers. These learners from the school have volunteered to be apart of this programme. Perhaps this is an area in the future that needs to be relooked and addressed.

4.4.3 Trainers

Myrick, (1988:118) states that the key to any program is the trainer, who selects trainees and projects. The keys to any trainer's success are the following: -

- the careful selection of trainees,
- a structured curriculum,
- and close support groups.

Every programme is different; yet, there are some common features, which often predict favourable programme outcomes. Networking on a state and national level provides opportunities for trainers to stay and informed professionally and to support others who are engaged in the work of peer helping.

4.4.4 Mediator

When developing a selection criterion the following qualities of an effective mediator should be considered according to Gilhooly and Scheuch, (2000:9):

- An effective mediator is a person who cares about his or her school and wants to make it a more peaceful and orderly place.
- An effective mediator is a conscientious student who keep up to date with her or his work.
- A honourable student is not a pre-requisite.
- An effective mediator is a person who can work under strict rules of confidentiality.
- An effective mediator must be willing to participate in training and attend occasional meetings with advisers and/or trainer to strengthen his or her mediation skills.

Once applicants have been selected the number of applicants can be narrowed down with the objective to interview them, Gilhooley and Scheuch, (2000:19).

4.4.5 Peer-counselors/Mediators

Peer counselors should expose themselves by doing religious services, for example chapel services or taking part in Life Orientation lessons. Gilhooley and Scheuch, (2000:7) state that students have the power to sell a peer-counseling programme by sharing their experiences and answering questions from an audience. Chapel services or assemblies can provide them with this opportunity.

4.4.6 Marketing

Gilhooley and Scheuch, (2000:41), further make the following suggestions that will ensure that everyone understands the "new" process:

- Send a letter to parents explaining the programme, and prepare a press release that includes a picture of the new peer-counselors.
- Prepare a central located bulletin board with photographs of the new mediators and explanations about when and how peer-counseling can take place.

- Make banners to hang in hallways.
- Prepare a video clip to be played for the learners as part of daily announcements, introducing the peer counselors and explaining the new process.
- Have a new peer counselor visit classrooms to demonstrate peer counseling and to answer questions from their peers.
- Include an article in the school paper, explaining the process of peer counseling.
- Design pamphlets, which include pictures, an explanation of peer counseling and how referrals can be made.
- Design T-shirts for peer counselors to wear on special occasions.

Marketing of peer counseling must become an integral part of the marketing flow-chart. Without the “buy-in” from all stakeholders the project will experience resistance due to a lack of knowledge and understanding.

4.4.7 Community involvement

The peer counselors should take part in community projects, namely cleaning the stream close to their school.

Peer counselors from other school should come together to discuss their challenges and their achievements. By sharing their experiences, peer-counselors will strengthen their skills, (Gilhooley and Scheuch, 2000:56).

4.4.8 Operational process

Specific time should be set aside when counseling could be done and the school should be informed about this time. Peer counseling should be allocated a special venue and the entire school should be made aware of where this is. Cowie and Wallace, (2000:74) state that peer support services need to be as accessible as possible. This means that potential

users should know how and when to contact the peer counselors. Furthermore, a room staffed with peer counselors at specific times should be provided so that anyone can drop in if they want to talk or discuss matters of personal importance to them.

4.4.9 Management support

All stakeholders should support the concept of peer counseling. It is essential to have the full backing of the management team and or governing body and the SRC; the success of the programme depends on their back up, Cowie and Wallace, (2000:64). This view is echoed by Donald et al., (1997:192) who states that it is imperative that peer counselors be supported in the early stages of implementation.

4.4.10 Up-skilling

Peer counselors should receive regular refresher course about the skills need for counseling. This can be achieved by having regular adult support and supervision, Cowie and Wallace, (2000:31). To be effective, student development should involve:

- The development of the personal identity of the learners, which involves a value system and a vocational purpose
- Interpersonal development, which includes communication skills, the ability to understand and empathize others
- The development of intellectual and academic skills which permit the individual to engage in lifelong learning
- To development of both aesthetic and physical recreation appreciation and participation, (Brown in Motsabi, 1999:31).

4.4.11 Stigmatisation

The learner at the school should be educated about what peer counseling is all about to help remove the stigma attached to peer counseling.

4.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The following recommendations can be made for further studies to build onto this one. This research study has only concentrated on the perceptions of peer counselors regarding their experiences with peer counseling. Further research can concentrate on:

- Exploring the perceptions of the learners who use the peer counseling service.
- The perceptions of educators regarding peer counseling.
- Analyzing the effects of peer counseling at secondary school level.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study can be listed as follows:

- As this was a small school, there was a limited number of learners to work with.
- Peer counseling is still a new concept at this school, this is the second year that peer counselors have been trained. Only two groups have been trained as peer counselors. Thus the effects of peer counseling is limited.

4.7 SUMMARY

This research aimed to explore peer counselors perceptions about peer counseling. Their perceptions are useful as it can act as guidelines when implementing peer counseling at secondary school level. These peer counselors are filled with hope, the hope that they can assist their peers. They were very eager to share their experiences with the researcher. All in all this was a positive experience for the researcher and the participants, and a win/win, (Covey, 1989:206) situation was defiantly fostered for both researcher and participants. To quote on of the peer counselors: *"I think that this (the interview) can be a good thing, you (the researcher) coming here and interviewing us. Because it gave us a*

chance to actually re-evaluate ourselves and how we really impacting people out there..."

Peer group counseling is a powerful intervention strategy with the adolescent, since it is the power of the peer group that influences young people the most (Erikson, in Carty, Rosenbaum, Lafreniere, Sutton, 2000:1). Peer counseling can play an effective role in South African school if it is implemented effectively, has all major stakeholders (management team, learners and parents) supporting it and is effectively supervised.

4.8 CONCLUSION

As social beings, we are dependent on individuals who make up groups to socialise with. However, the group has no existence apart from the members who compose it, and the psychology of the group must be approached through the common psychology of its members. Within this context peer counseling should be seen as a meaningful tool and should be utilised more in-depth and frequently within our community and schools in particular. In groups we witness an interaction among its members' personalities, furthermore peers as a group have an implicit if not explicit purpose, these give direction and focus to the behaviour it arouses and sponsors from fellow peers. Peer groups may be classified as intimate, primary groups; as such they have the first form of interaction. Imagine if the peers are more than adequately prepared to interact, engage and offer solutions at this level – societies and communities could be changed forever.

In a South African context with a low socio-economic living standard. The researcher holds the view that peer group activities should remain informal

Attributions considered by adolescents as essential to peer group acceptance are: physical attractiveness, friendliness and an outgoing personality. Physical attractiveness has been found to correlate positively with peer group popularity, level of self-esteem and even the qualities of leadership. While encouraging independence from parental standards, the peer group demands conformity to its own standards.

Peer support systems also offer the opportunity for adults to reconsider their own ways of relating to the young people in their charge and to one another and to reflect on the message that they are conveying in their everyday interactions. It is possible to create environments that promote rather than discourage pro-social ways of living and communicating with others. Peer support is one strand in education of our future citizens. It is our belief that through the experience of peer support in action children and young people can develop the knowledge, skills and understandings that they will need as they face roles and responsibilities of adult life.

The benefits of peer counseling are immense. Peer groups help children establish their independence and make the transition from reliance on their families' to relative freedom in adolescence and adulthood. Peers offer new patterns of reciprocity: they reverberate thoughts, feelings, expectations and demands. When adolescents can see how their friends respond to their parents, they are encouraged to examine new values and relationships. The common repertoire of language, slang, grooming, clothing, music, and so forth that young people adapt in their interactions, a cultural distinctiveness, that is, youth culture. Youth-culture distinctiveness tends to be blurred by the continuity in tastes that extends from adolescence into adulthood. On the other hand peer group communications seem to contribute to youth-culture distinctiveness. The language, values, beliefs, and standards of adolescents tend to create patterns of interaction that set them apart from adults. A peer group may become a reference source for the behaviour of adolescents. Peer groups allow youth to assume a variety of roles-to be temporarily leaders or followers, deviants or conformists. The value and norms of the group permits adolescents to acquire perspective on their own values and attitudes.

Although violence, abuse, criminal behaviour and social misconduct in our society cannot be blamed on the schools, our schools are microcosms of society. Therefore, schools are a logical place to begin solving these problems. For change to be made on large scales, we need to begin with our children. That we can teach students the skills to resolve conflicts peacefully through mutual respect and understanding of feelings, active

listening and cooperative problem solving. Peer mediation programmes use counseling over the course of time and should lead to the development of citizens as self-regulating members of society. This in turn will lead to more peaceful and productive schools and a less violent society in general.

Parents and peer relations complement one another. The parent-child bond provides children with the security to enter the world of peers. Peer interaction, in turn, permits children to expand the social skills they have begun to acquire within the family. Studies of peer-only engagement would result in misfits in our community and society at large.



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APPENDIX A

Letters to request participation in this research



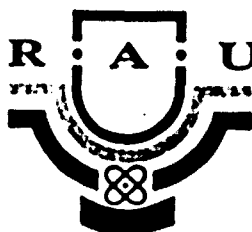
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2003-07-16

Reference Number: 08/05/03

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: "A psycho-educational assessment of adolescents' perceptions on peer counselling."

RESEARCHER: M. Moosa

**SUPERVISOR(S): Prof. C.P.H. Myburgh
Prof. M. Poggenpoel**

The Academic Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Nursing of the Rand Afrikaans University evaluated the research proposal and consent letters of the above research project and confirms that it complies with the approved Ethical Research Standards of the Rand Afrikaans University.

The researcher demonstrated his/her intent to comply with the approved Ethical Research Standards during conduct of the research project.

Recommendations were made by the committee which will be conveyed to you and, if complied with, will improve the quality of your proposal.

Yours sincerely

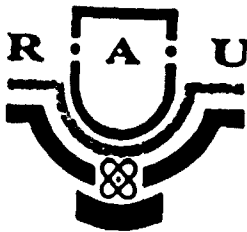
**MARIE POGGENPOEL (PROF)
CHAIRPERSON: FACULTY COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC ETHICS**

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE:

- A letter requesting permission to conduct research in the schools should be included if necessary.
- The rights of the school governing "community", Education Department, etc. need to be clarified.



RANDSE AFRIKAANSE UNIVERSITEIT
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♦ 27 - 11 - 489 2911



RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY
PO Box 534, Auckland Park 2006
Republic of South Africa
Fax (011) 489 2191
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Dear Principal

CONSENT FORM TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am an M.Ed (Psycho-Educational Programme Development) student at Rand Afrikaans University. Currently I am doing research on adolescent's perceptions of peer counseling. My supervisors are professors C.P.H. Myburgh and M. Poggenpoel.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore and describe adolescents perceptions on peer counseling programmes at secondary schools.
2. To describe guidelines for implementing peer counseling in secondary schools.

I want to invite learners at your school, between the ages of 15 and 17 years of age to participate in this research. They will be interviewed by me. The interviews will take approximately 40 to 60 minutes. This may be followed by subsequent short interviews for clarification.

Interview(s) will be audiotaped for analysis by the researcher and to verify findings through an independent coder. The audiotapes will only be listened to by myself and my supervisors and be stored safely under lock and key. After the audiotapes have been transcribed they will be destroyed. After the transcription has been done a copy will be brought to learners to make sure that no misunderstandings have occurred.

Participation is voluntarily. Learners have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any given time. Their identity will be dealt with in the strictest confidentiality. The findings of this research will be used to develop guideline to assist secondary schools in the implementation of a peer-counseling programme.

The direct and immediate gain from the research project is that the learners will be able to verbalize their perceptions on peer counseling. The study involves no foreseeable risks or harm to you.

Should you have any further questions relating to this research you may contact me at 082 4961933.

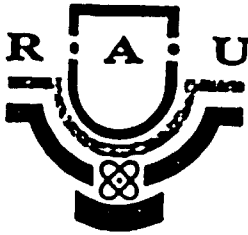
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Should you have any further questions relating to this research you may contact me at 082 4961933.

I have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to allow learner at the school to participate in this study.

Principal's signature

Date

MRS. M. MOOSA
RESEARCHER

UNIVERSITY 31.07.03
OF
JOHANNESBURG
Date

C.P.H. MYBURGH
HED. B.Sc. Hons. M. Comm, D.Ed.
PROFESSOR: EDUCATION SCIENCE
SUPERVISOR

21/7/03.

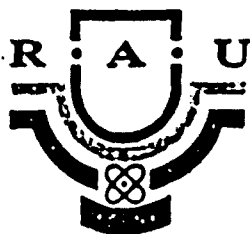
Date

MARIE POGGENPOEL
RN., Ph.D
PROFESSOR: NURSING SCIENCE
CO-SUPERVISOR

31/07/03

Date

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Dear Participant

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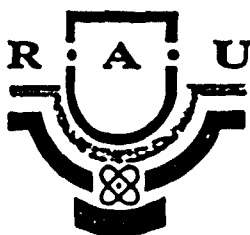
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Participation is voluntarily. You have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any given time. Your identity will be dealt with in the strictest confidentiality. The findings of this research will be used to develop guideline to assist secondary schools in the implementation of a peer-counseling programme.

The direct and immediate gain from the research project is that you will be able to verbalize your perceptions on peer counseling. The study involves no foresee-able risks or harm to you.

Should you have any further questions relating to this research you may contact me at 082 4961933.

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I have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature

Date

Parent's signature

Date

MRS. M. MOOSA
RESEARCHER

31. 07. 03

Date

C.P.H. MYBURGH
HED. B.Sc. Hons. M. Comm, D.Ed.
PROFESSOR: EDUCATION SCIENCE
SUPERVISOR

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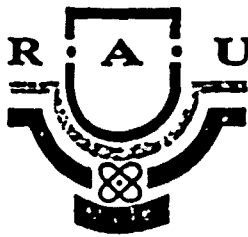
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Dear Parents/Guardians

CONSENT FORM TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am an M.Ed (Psycho-Educational Programme Development) student at Rand Afrikaans University. Currently I am doing research on adolescent's perceptions of peer counseling. My supervisors are professors C.P.H. Myburgh and M. Poggenpoel.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore and describe adolescents perceptions on peer counseling programmes at secondary schools.
2. To describe guidelines for implementing peer counseling in secondary schools.

I want to invite your child to participate in this research and will be interviewed by me. The interviews will take approximately 40 to 60 minutes. This may be followed by subsequent short interviews for clarification.

Interview(s) will be audiotaped for analysis by the researcher and to verify findings through an independent coder. The audiotapes will only be listened to by myself and my supervisors and be stored safely under lock and key. After the audiotapes have been transcribed they will be destroyed. After the transcription has been done a copy will be brought to your child to make sure that no misunderstandings have occurred.

Participation is voluntarily. Your child has the freedom to withdraw from the study at any given time. Their identity will be dealt with in the strictest confidentiality. The findings of this research will be used to develop guideline to assist secondary schools in the implementation of a peer-counseling programme.

The direct and immediate gain from the research project for your child is that your child will be able to verbalize his/her perceptions on peer counseling. The study involves no foresee-able risks or harm to you.

Should you have any further questions relating to this research you may contact me at 082 4961933.

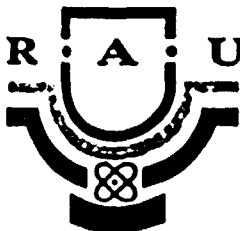
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I have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to allow my child to participate in this study.

Parent's signature

Date

MRS. M. MOOSA
RESEARCHER

15.05.03

Date

C.P.H. MYBURGH
HED. B.Sc. Hons. M. Comm, D.Ed.
PROFESSOR: EDUCATION SCIENCE
SUPERVISOR

15.05.03.

Date

MARIE POGGENPOEL
RN., Ph.D
PROFESSOR: NURSING SCIENCE
CO-SUPERVISOR

15/05/03

Date

APPENDIX B

Transcript 2 of the second series of tape-recorded interviews



Second group interviews

- Received their training last year.
- Qualified peer counselors.
- Number of participants: ten

Researcher	<p>Right, guys, welcome back. Before we start, I want to thank you for your last interviews as I was saying to some of them before, from the last interviews I got a lot of information. So much information that I needed to come back and just get more from you, as it was just so good. Thanks for that.</p> <p>What I've done is, I have written down from your interviews, and this was the interviews from yourselves and the other group. These were some of the themes you came up with. So these are joint themes from both groups basically. So what I've pick up from the last interviews I did, was, that the two groups basically spoke about positive things about peer counseling, some negative things and a lot of suggestions were made about peer counseling. Some of the positive things, and that is not always that, and it were a good thing. And the good thing about that is that you were helping people, which is good for you.</p> <p>A negative thing was that you felt that people didn't trust you as peer counselors. Because it was a new idea at school that that created some problems also. Some of the suggestions you made was that you needed some more training, maybe more professional training. You needed more support from the school with what you are doing, and also that the peer counselors maybe needed to be more visible. That the school needed to know more about you and who you were.</p> <p>Feel free to speak on the same topics again, if there is anything else you like to add, anything new. From that I need to go back to my original question, which was, "What do you think about peer counseling?" You can use the opportunity to maybe reinforce some of these things or to add on to them again. Right.</p>
Participant 2	<p>Ok, Miss, I have a comment. Miss, many of us here think that they want to start helping people. I think that is useless Miss, because most of us here forgot how to handle a patient Miss, and all of that. I think that one really counsel people, one need to go through the lessons again Miss. Uh, just like a summary of each, because I forgot everything Miss. I only know some parts and I will not be able to help a person because I forgot my skills Miss. And that won't be very helpful.</p>

Researcher	Do you think that you should be going over your skills again you have learned in your initial training?
Participant 5	Yes Miss. Because it takes a lot of a person to come to another person to ask for help. Now, now if I can't help this person, then this person will feel off and do something drastic Miss.
Researcher	Ok, anyone else?
Participant 2	I think what they actually mean about the whole course set out, you know, it was more about RMB and not any written material to go back to and study for and things like that. So if you can get that, you can constantly go over that and then it will work out.
Researcher	Thank you. Does anyone have anything else to say about positive things regarding peer counseling? Anything else you come up with or anything new about peer counseling?
Participant 7	Miss, this morning this blind man came to come speak in the chapel. And, *** ¹ , my friend here, said that he has something because he made the school aware of the outside world. Like how to accommodate blind people? Now I think that we as peer counselors we must bring people in, like just to talk to them about things that we encounter in the outside world. Like maybe paraplegic people and all that. And things, and then how to like handle the situation. Bring more people in to talk to the students.
Participant 10	<p>I also think that we must play an interactive part in the community. There is no point in us just ending here in school, making a difference here in school, where we can also go places like the AIDS hospice and help there or outside places like the old age home and make a positive contribution and in terms of resolving of problems as well, you know make a visible difference into the community,</p> <p>And as far as the support from the school as well, I think most people don't realise the importance of peer counselors. They don't actually approach us, they not able to approach us in result and they don't see the significance of it. They don't take it seriously, so they say. So I think that we should reinforced the seriousness of peer counselors and the importance of having peer counselors within the school.</p>
Participant 5	In line with that, I also think that it would be a good idea to have some sort of support groups in the school instead of coming every week meeting and discussing techniques or methods or whatever. I think it is important to invite other members of the school, people actually want to talk can come

¹ *** Names have been deleted

	<p>every Wednesday when we are meeting and we can have a support group open discussions when we talk about anything. I think that is very helpful.</p> <p>In terms of visibility, I think that there isn't much recognition. In fact there is no recognition at all for peer group counselors because when you look at the school, most of the time the people that are actually being looked at, are people like the SRC, the peer group counselors should be like that. We should be like the SRC, it should be more competitive, and it shouldn't be this secret organisation that is just happening every Wednesday without the rest of the school being included.</p> <p>I think it should be more widespread, I think there should be more presentations in the chapel. We should have a lot more things happening every, very often, so that people be made constantly aware of peer group counseling.</p>
Participant 3	<p>I guess, a suggestion that would be for peer counselors to actually work hand in hand with the, with the class representatives and SRC. Because we could actually find out more from the students especially through the class representatives because they would be the ones who are actually communicating with the individual classes. So we would actually get to here more people's opinions and problems and suggestions and things like that that would actually make us more efficient at what we are doing, what we try to do.</p>
Participant 2	<p>I also think that as a suggestion to help her in what she said, we can have a box in reception where the people can put their suggestions in if they are afraid to come up to us in person. We can't exactly talk to everyone in the school so that it will be open at all times to anyone.</p>
Participant 1	<p>Miss, I think, that the thing of the SRC. We should nominate someone here to take part in the SRC, like in their meetings, and I nominate this young lady here. I believe in you. Miss, Miss the thing about talking in chapel is that the first time we did that, I got very negative reports. They said no, it was boring, and they did not know what was going on. I do agree that we have to let the students know in chapel, but if we do it, we must really evaluate how we going to do that. So last time when we did it, it was not very successful, Like the students, they were getting very negative towards peer counselors Miss.</p>
Participant 2	<p>I think the whole peer-counseling thing, is that people already had negative connotations to the word "counseling" before you even take it further. That is where the problem actually is, and the hindrance between us getting to interact more with students as them with us. I think that is where the problem really is. Because most people say yes right, we are peer counselors and you know. They don't really acknowledge that you actually</p>

	qualified in what you are doing and that is actually an important part of their lives as well as yours.
Participant 7	I think that we cannot reach everybody, there are people that will be interested and there will those that won't be interested. And most of time the people that are negative are the first ones to speak. The people that are actually listening and taking this into consideration most of the time, won't say anything, it is those people that always have negative things to say who usually speaks out. You know, I think we can continue and it is up to the people how they take it. Because you cannot, you cannot succeed the first time around, you actually have to do things over and over until some people actually consider it.
Participant 10	I think that is also up to us to convince people of what we are doing and how it is going to help them and benefit them.
Participant 7	With that as well, we, we have, we also have to take responsibility of actually going out and making peer-counseling "WHOW", you know. Getting to arouse that interest with them within the juniors you know. So when they get a little older, whatever, you know. They can actually say that, I always wanna to be a part of that group. I always wanna to be a peer counselor. You know. So we also need to have that vibrant peer-counseling thing going.
Participant 6	So that doesn't mean that if we do more of, I think mostly the school, when they think of peer counselors, they think of my psychologist who is my age. I think if they actually do discover that even though we have told them that we also do development programmes they should also realise that we are not only here to help them through problems, yes we are going to do that as well if they got suggestions on how to make the school a better place to live in, and things like that, we are actually here to also help them with that. Because we are not here to be their doctors, we also here to just be people who improve (college unclear) college as a whole and eventually the whole community.
Researcher	Does anyone maybe want to speak about more positive things about peer counseling?
Participant 5	I think that peer counseling positively helps you understand that people don't do things on purpose. That maybe sometimes a person would say, "I hate you", or something, and you wonder why, and you wonder why is certain people doing such things to you. You actually kind of get to understand, like *** ² said about psychology, you actually understand the way people think and the way people would react.

² *** Names have been deleted

	<p>So you learn not to take things personally. And as a peer counselor you are not suppose to get personal about these issues. You cant really takes a person's problem and bring it into your own life and then sympathize with them. You are not allowed to do that. I think that with that skill, you actually learn that people don't do things that maybe a person would do that, but you don't take things personal anymore.</p>
Participant 9	<p>And in addition to that, the skills that we do learn, we can actually help people once you are old enough and have children of your own. Because in that way, you actually understand human behaviour more in detail rather than any other average person. You actually understand why is it that certain people do certain things. You wouldn't, you actually stopped being prejudice, ok not really stop, but your level of which you will be prejudice would be actually decreased because you actually be more objective towards things.</p>
Participant 5	<p>This is positivism towards the community, the school community, because in terms of when we are speaking about measuring the positives that we had in our school community, that it is a little difficult because in the sense that you are working with individuals so it is very difficult to measure the, the difference that we have made in the school. But then, with the positive, it is more building you as a person; it is building you as a person.</p>
Participant 6	<p>I agree with that. Because of a lot of us live in communities and societies and peer counselors gives you that platform to actually learn how to talk to people and be more open to people and learn about yourself, understand a couple of things about yourself, that sometimes you overlooked or sometimes you didn't see.</p> <p>I think that one-day when you grow up, then you are more conscious about the different personalities in the community, and therefore become a better person. That you can communicate better, and seeing that you do know yourself better, you are comfortable with who you are and for your confidence you are also boosted. I think that is how it is happening, personally.</p>
Researcher	<p>I think it was anything that you think is positive about peer counseling, just the general concept. What do you think is a positive thing about it?</p>
Participant 7	<p>I think, with peer counseling right, it was established that we could go out and make a difference in the school, right. It was established that we can counsel others students and other pupils. And that still, I can say, it is working. Because still there isn't much of a difference. When you look at it at the end of the day, students will still prefer going to teachers and talk to</p>

	teachers about their problems as oppose to coming to us. So in terms of that it is not really much.
Participant 6	<p>Miss, I am saying I think that our target market should be the juniors. The seniors we will never get. Up from Grade 10 to upwards, we won't get them. They think that they are all big and don't trust us other peers. I think that our target should be grade sevens and grade eights Miss. Because if we arouse enthusiasm with in them. Then in that way it is going to grow Miss, if we like aim at ***³, for instance, they won't get her. Because I mean she already learned how to deal with her problems by keeping it all inside.</p> <p>We wont get her. But if we aim maybe at someone like at ***⁴, in grade six, just as an example, and then that will help us.</p>
Participant 2	<p>I just think you will develop something at a young age, it is in you when you get older, so if they start doing the peer counselor thing from a younger age, you will start to deal with your problems and be more open with other children. More open to go to peer counselors. Because at the moment people aren't open enough, they don't feel enough trust to go to peer counselors and talk to them. And sometimes they feel like it is not, they are not comfortable with it. But if they had started at a younger age, they would have become more comfortable with you.</p> <p>So if they start at a younger age, I think that they will become more comfortable and it will start progressing more than it is now. Now you are starting at a dead point, there is now point in starting at a dead point. You can rather start at a point that has more potential, yes.</p>
Participant 1	<p>I agree with *** and ***⁵, but however I think that the fact that senior students are more reluctant to actually partake in this peer-counseling thing, this should not necessarily be a negative thing, it should be a challenge to peer counselors that we change their mindset. I mean that is not an impossible thing to achieve, and by us, giving it say a lot about us, and one will actually learn from this whole peer counseling thing.</p> <p>I think if people see things working, they come to take part in everything but as long as there is an effort to show them that peer counseling can have a positive contribution within society, how are they going to believe it. Believe me, starting out is very difficult. But as soon as people see things working, that is when they actually want to join in. So, I think we are very responsible for that part of making sure that it works and they see there the essence of peer counseling and how it can actually be used positively.</p>
Participant 2	I agree with her, because by going out into the community, by going out

³ *** Names have been deleted

⁴ *** Names have been deleted

⁵ *** Names have been deleted

	<p>into society, and spreading the work, telling the people what we are all about, and what we do, the little things. Communicate to help people with their problems and everything and get feedback and then they will see that we have made a difference and then maybe then they will start trusting us and come to us and speak about things.</p>
Participant 7	<p>I feel that we as peer counselors have made a big change in the school, just we haven't noticed it, because things just is normal, but us as peer counselors have been established here, because there was a case of suicide right. And there hasn't been a case since then. And you don't know if people are smoking on the school property.</p>
Researcher	<p>So you have made an impact?</p>
Participant 4	<p>Yes Miss. I think that we will get acknowledged by the school after the AIDS week we have planned, because maybe the school will realised that it is not just for fun but they will see that this is what we want to do.</p>
Participant 5	<p>I do agree, I think even though we go out into the community there are students in the school who don't even probably belong into that community. If we not affecting them, they would still think what is the point of you being here, because you are not really helping me as an individual, you are helping others.</p> <p>Ok, fine, we are a helping hand, but it is not like that it is impacting you personally, so it is not like they might really change their views on peer counseling. You might change others but you might not change everyone. And what extend is it that even though we target our seniors, are we really gonna get a response because at the same time, you cant teach an old dog new tricks. So in a way, even though it is a challenge to us, I, ok, maybe I sound a bit negative, but to such an extend you might not really have that much impact on seniors rather than juniors, because juniors don't really learn much in the school.</p> <p>And with seniors, part of their decision will partly be influencing by who exactly is a peer counselor. Because it depends on who we are, and if they said that they don't like some of the peer counselors, because of their personal vendettas against the actual person that will actually prevent them, actually influence those around.</p>
Participant 7	<p>I see what you mean. At the same time I think the problems are amongst them. Being negative, you have already concluded in your mind that you can't convince senior students of taking part in peer counseling and if you feel that your are being a failure to yourself so how are you going to actually convince these senior students to actually be part of these peer counseling session. Because if you have concluded that you failed, then</p>

	obviously in their eyes, I don't see how you going to convince them or make them see the relevance in what you are doing.
Participant 10	<p>I agree with her. In addition to the older people growing up, they are actually vulnerable, that is the reason why they give you this negative and no care attitude, because the older you grow up there are many questions that you asked. I think that younger people are actually much stronger than older people, because those people still believe, they will still have faith.</p> <p>The older we grow, we loose all of that. I think that it is at that stage that you can make a difference because the older you grow you encounter more problems and that is the reason why people is so negative the older we get because of the problems they encounter. So I think the people we can work with, are the seniors, even though they maybe negative about it, but there are some people who are willing to change. And there are very few people who are that hard or that thick not to change at all. At least we can make that little difference.</p>
Participant 1	<p>I think that we are judging people a bit to harshly because firstly everyone has that idea in their heads that matriculants are so old compare to, like the standard sixes. I think that is a bit to harsh and I think that you guys are really taking it to extreme. Because you are going on that we are really older and really hard up and really not willing to do anything. Like, concerning peer counseling.</p> <p>If you never even tried to convince them, and I agree with ***⁶ that our mindset is wrong, because we are so negative before we even started. And we already saying that they going to reject the ideas, they are not going to be cooperative and I think that this is really the wrong attitude to have. I think that we are taking it a bit too far. I don't think that they are so bad.</p>
Participant 2	<p>Miss, I think that they are a bit too passive as peer counselors. Ja. Because most of our students they already forgot that there are peer counselors in this school. I am sure that they don't know what they stand for and all that Miss. I am suggesting, suggesting that like, when we do something in chapel, not like take the whole chapel, just do something. Like to remind the people that we are there and that we still active. People are going to say, say now if she asked me if I am going to peer counseling and I asked who is that? Or what is that. I don't know what she is talking about Miss. Now I have a question, what is the point of peer counseling?</p>
Participant 1	<p>I think that it is there to help people with their problems, that there is no one else to turn to. And you are there, with your skills to help them.</p>

* *** Names have been deleted

Participant 2	It is just there to help. It is a helping hand within the community and to individuals as well.
Participant 1	<p>I think it is there to help you as a peer counselor also. Because to help you, you know what you are capable of doing. Because if you seen people in situations when you see people are helpless and you also feel that you are helpless, what kind of a friend are you then if you are just going to be a helpless friend.</p> <p>I think when you do peer counseling and you realise that it is not only your friends in this world that have troubles, everyone else has troubles and you are available and you are able to help people, then you realise what is the point of peer counseling. Because there are, everyone has problems, and especially in high school you see that people have their own issues to deal with.</p> <p>Also coming back to the point that it is easier to target juniors because when you are in matric, you do have more problems, more homework, more projects and it is true that the age difference might not be vast, but then the status is vast because when you are in standard five you see a matriculant being so much older than you. Even it is only maybe four years. Ok, a peer counselor, it does have a point because you are helping yourself and others. So what is the point in saying you are such a friend but then at certain times, you can't do anything. Then you just might as well be another person.</p>
Participant 2	I feel that us as peer counselors should approach students more open-mindedly because now like you are saying that matrics with that mindset you can't help them, and then you, that negative thought might not be helpful. I think the older you get, the more problems you get. So, I think that we should concentrate more on the seniors than the juniors as the seniors have more problems than the juniors. I think if we are more positive in ourselves, we can reach them.
Participant 1	At the same time, not neglect juniors because I think if you actually enforce something to help them at a young age, then you, they can stick with it and improve with it the older they get. They won't be by the time they become seniors, they probably won't have that many problems or will be able to deal with them probably even better. So, in a way, we should target the school in the whole.
Participant 6	I think that we should be a guidance so that we don't neglect certain people like the juniors and they should made to feel that they are insignificant in any way because they won't have achieved anything, where if there is a balance you will be able to target both the seniors and the juniors so you

	contributing to different age groups at the same time.
Participant 5	I think that we should also remember that a problem is a problem whether it is about older kids or small kids. At that stage it still stresses you out. So I think if you trying to classify different types of people you trying to approach, to classify problems I think that you are basically wasting their time. Because you can't come to a person and say you've got this type of problem, I know how to solve this problem. Because a problem is a problem and there are steps which you take, to tackle each problem and then use the same steps to tackle any problem.
Participant 9	I think that we should discuss this with our principal so that he can discuss this in the school chapel every morning, saying something so that we can be acknowledge and agree with them to select someone to be on the SRC so that. But we want to do is also part of the school and not just.
Participant 3	Also, that the peer counselors are passive, I think that we actually have to do something about this as a group. For example take the messages, if you want Mr. *** ⁷ to keep on saying something everyday, maybe, if we have something like, a message of the day, I know that that would make more sense, yes we do have the board, but how much paper and money are we going to be wasting that everyday we put a message up there. And we can't we obviously have to leave a message on there for least a week, so that everyone has to see it. So if we have something like our main theme on the board, like on a Monday, and during the week give Mr. *** ⁸ a message to say that relate to the theme, it would make sense to that.
Participant 4	I agree with her. I think that the peer counselors should have one motto, which will help us get out of the situation that we are in now. Try until you succeed. Obviously you gonna face problems along the way but you have to learn out of your mistakes, not saying that we made mistakes, we try and try till eventually there is someone out there that will get the message and that will effect the whole society and the whole community in our school and they will all get the message.
Participant 5	I think that us as peer counselors should upgrade our wall because that was last season's. This is really old. We discuss that we will change it every second weekend, it hasn't been done. We should do something about it.
Participant 7	They should be seeing that we do things that we want to do, we don't actually reflect the positive attitude. Maybe that is why we don't stand out. Because we like that spontaneous overall look. We have to kind of work on that.

⁷ *** Names have been deleted

⁸ *** Names have been deleted

Participant 9	And then it takes us back to the point that was raised a bit earlier that we should invite the school in anything that we are doing, that we should be a little more transparent you know. Like we must also be a little more initiating and a little more initiative. Like that river, you see that river down there.
Participant 4	Which river?
Participant 9	<p>I think that we can actually take the initiate and go out there and clean it. Have you seen how much litter is in there?</p> <p>We go out there and clean it and we invite the school and we tell them that we are going down to the river to clean the river. It would be interested, you can bring your sneakers and come and have a good time cleaning the river. (Laughing) We need to become a little bit more transparent and a little more. Because if we clean that river, obviously it will go to the city council and it would like St ***⁹ students cleaned that river.</p>
Participant 8	And at the same time you are not only involving the school, but you involving the community so you see it is more beneficial to us that we do such things, because by cleaning the river, you influence other people to do the same. And by cleaning the river, you also influence the people living around the river to also do the same, to partake. So we work with the community.
Participant 4	No, it is just the litter, picking up the litter and initiate that they actually come and clean the river. Things like that.
Participant 7	So it is not benefiting our community only, but our school as well.
Participant 5	In the process we can actually find out from in the school what is missing or things like that. The garden, just improving the school at the same time. Lets face it, if you wanna be noticed you have to work you know. You have to get to the nitty gritty which everyone is running away from, take the initiative of actually do it so that we can be noticed.
Participant 6	To start with the small things so that we can make a very big impact ultimately. (Laughing)
Participant 4	Because that is also advertising ourselves you know. You go out there, we get a camera. We get a camera and the pictures will show that we are having a good time. Then we stick up the pictures up against the notice boards. Yes, and juniors think that it is fun. Because it is fun, we are having fun with our environment, we are having fun with everything else, and we

* *** Names have been deleted

	are working together. It will actually reinforce that whole the message in chapel about environmental week, something along that line.
Participant 6	I also think that if we can visit the AIDS hospice together, and take pictures there, since we are having this whole AIDS campaign.
Participant 7	Or fundraising and we could donate whatever funds we brought up to the AIDS hospice and charity homes which will also will be a positive contribution to society. Once people see things like that then you are not only influencing the school, but you are also influencing the world as a whole because if you have such positive contributions and have people who hear about it, eventually you influencing other people, encouraged them to do the same thing.
Participant 6	In addition to the AIDS thing, you know when they are normally marching these AIDS marches, it would actually be good in actually join in and have fun, do it all.
Participant 7	At the same time, not only AIDS as well, because sometimes people tend to neglect other things like homeless people and things like that and focus to much on AIDS, we cant necessarily sponsor everybody or create funds or forms whatever, we can help ourselves in our time. We can spend some time with homeless children and talk to them, you know, showing that people are there for them and people do care for them, because everyone is going to judge the people that we are going to counsel, simply on the way they look and because of their status. They are not actually contributing much, they might as well not do anything because they are pretentious and our services are only provided to select people so.
Participant 5	And in addition to that we could actually asked for donations of blankets, old clothing etc. Actually go out and donate these things to homeless peoples or visit old age home like *** ¹⁰ House. Things like that.
Participant 9	Show other people that they are loved and at least they also know, in a way improve the relationship between people, disadvantage people, homeless people and normal people in the society. Because I think that there is a lot of stigma attached to homeless people and things like that. And as a result, there is a gap between the two. So if you try to spend time with them, then eventually you can work towards a common goal. You know.
Participant 6	I think that it is going to take us back to the point *** ¹¹ made about re-launching ourselves. Because for a long time we thought that peer

¹⁰ *** Names have been deleted

¹¹ *** Names have been deleted

	<p>counseling, you just walk around, somebody notices you, notices your badge and they come to you and you counsel them. For a long time that is what we thought counseling was all about. I think that we actually have to re-launch ourselves and actually go out and be vibrant counselors. Yes, and sure counseling is not just about sitting down and talking to people, it is tackling different problems on different ways. Getting immortalized, one for all. You know. Because we tackling our AIDS, tackling our environment tackling our counseling thing and everything else. We need to go out there.</p>
Participant 9	<p>I think that if you look at the bigger picture as well, peer counselors contributing a generous amount to the community, then you start to tell people, like bigger companies and stuff like that. Because if we are doing a lot in society, and they are big companies, they will feel obliged to do something as well, so in that way effecting a lot of people because you are challenging the mindsets of elderly people, your parents as well.</p>
Participant 7	<p>As you said earlier, by helping the school I don't think that we must do a lot to help the school. The school has money and they are wasting their money on things such as radio stations and stuff. We don't need radio stations. What is the school going to benefit out of a radio station? Is entertainment more important as someone living on the street or something? That money that they are using for the radio station can go towards poor people or.</p>
Participant 6	<p>There is time for school and time for work but by advertising you also get to achieve a lot.</p>
Participant 5	<p>I think that once eventually the radio station is out and national or provincial or whatever, then people can know and advertise more and; more money can come in, in raising fund in that way through a radio station to get the response of people outside and you can actually have something like a slot on the radio station where people can call in with their problems and needs a counselor.</p>
Participant 9	<p>Talking is a very important part of life, and I think that a radio station could be quite helpful.</p>
Participant 6	<p>I think that the thing about the radio station is that it is not our money that makes a contribution to the radio station, yes, we are part of the school, so the school does have to think about us. Because if you were dependant on the school, we had to go to the SRC and to go to the principal for them to approved. So our ideas, we can actually loose that, so we can actually only use the school. So if they are going to have a radio station, we might as well advertise on it.</p>

Participant 7	I am not saying that the school is going to use our money that we raised for the radio station; I am saying that if the school needs something, they could have used that money for better stuff that will be more of advantage to us as students, whereas the radio station is just a flop.
Participant 10	Sorry, I want to differ. The radio station would actually help in the long run, maybe right now, we are wasting money but if you look at it two or three years down the line, it is actually going to benefit the school and the community.
Researcher	Ok, let me give him a chance.
Participant 7	<p>While you are talking of going into the river and cleaning it, what has come to mind. If you are going to do something like that, not that, something likes that, then you need something more than just a badge. (Laughing) Listen to me, something more than just a badge. I mean like maybe like a t-shirt or a jacket, I am just suggesting.</p> <p>So if people see us as peer counselors, now we just have a badge and going into the community it is not going to be very effective like, we have peer counselors and then we have our motto, and then we have an emblem, (Laughing). As peer counselors we need something like that Miss. So we are going into the community, who is this, the peer counselors at the back. You see.</p>
Participant 6	Skulls?
Participant 7	Look, everyone is now against me about the radio station. (Laughing) But this is important. But they are busy with radio stations. If the school closes down and there is a radio station, what does that help?
Researcher	Can I just say something? I am just worried that we are going completely off the topic. I like us just to focus on the topic about peer counseling.
Participant 5	Miss, Miss
Researcher	Any other ideas on that?
Participant 10	Miss, it doesn't matter if we agree or disagree, we can't it, Mr. *** ¹² already has his mind. What is the use of us talk about it here, it is done. No, it is finished. This is the school, peer counselors, talk about peer counselors.
Participant 7	I didn't tell you about the radio station.

¹² *** Names have been deleted

Researcher	Let us get back to the topic of peer counseling. I see that the time is also up. Almost up.
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Side Two

Participant 5	I think that it will actually help for us to be active, just to do things. Just take the initiative just do something. In fact in that way they will realise that we actually exist and eventually trust us. Because I think we need to find that trust and by earning that trust is to show them that we can actually do anything that we put our minds to. If we put our minds to painting etc, we can do it. So if you come with you problem and we are willing to help you, it can be done. Where there is a will, there is a way.
Participant 7	And I think that when we try to do something, we should stop having our own expectations as it was raised, we should stop, but what if they say this. Because we should know that we will never ever know the future, we wouldn't know their initial reactions and you do something, we set our minds to it. When it shows that you are serious about something, people will take your seriously.
Participant 4	I think that to be successful you have to believe so, to put your minds to it, you can do it. So maybe after the AIDS we will be more acknowledge, just give it a chance and see what happens.
Participant 7	I think first we can actually, first develop a relationship with the school. So you cant accept them to acknowledge us now. I mean, saying I am qualified to this and that, so ja, trust me. I am not going to trust that person unless they prove themselves. We need to prove ourselves trustworthy and they will trust us. Even if it is next year.
Participant 5	In believing in ourselves, we can actually achieve a lot and challenge them more, their expectation of the school, set a new trend you know. Ja, stand out.
Participant 7	<p>I think the most positive thing that we done are that we did started. Doesn't matter how long it takes to make the difference, the bottom line is that we did start peer group counseling and that is a very big step. It is the first thing that happened in ***¹³ and we started it and that already is a very good thing, a positive thing.</p> <p>And just a closing statement on the t-shirts, I think it is a brilliant idea. If you got t-shirts or sweaters then we have, like the matric jackets, everyone</p>

¹³ *** Names have been deleted

	knows that this is a matric jacket, it is a constant reminder that they are a separate group. If we get sweaters in the school *** ¹⁴ peer group counseling, that is just perfect. I think that is one thing that is just going to stand out.
Participant 2	Laughing. Mumbling of the group.
Researcher	Anyone else that wants to say a last few things?
Participant 6	I think a, to get this idea running about the sweaters, it is (laughing), yes Miss, ok. Let me rephrase, this thing running of the sweaters for the peer counselors, uhm, we can maybe contribute an amount, I am not saying what. Just to get this thing going.
All the participants	Laughing
Participant 8	I think that this can be a good thing, you coming here and interviewing us. Because it gave us a change to actually re-evaluate ourselves and how are really impacting people out there, maybe we should change the way that we do things every Wednesday and ja.
Participant 5	You really did change our mindsets because to us peer counseling was just about counseling you know, just offering. We realise that we can actually do more. There is more to peer counseling.
Participant 6	In a way, in a way as a peer counselor before, I use to just think that a peer counselor was better than any average person. This kind of like brought me down and make me realise that I may have more skills than others, but I should just learn to interact with everyone, just be like everyone. Therefore everyone that would come to me, approach me, eventually trust me because they would think that I am one of them.
Participant 4	I think peer counseling is also about giving a little bit of yourself to another person.
Participant 7	I feel like that to.
Participant 5	I think we actually move, taken a step forward in our minds. I think from now on it will be more positive.
Participant 7	And I think it is the way now we look, how to tackle things because before we decided we are going to do something like this , but what will the people think. I think now we have actually come to the point that we realise that, we want to help the people, but the people have to want to help themselves first.

¹⁴ *** Names have been deleted

Participant 10	Sometimes it was dry, it was pale, it wasn't fresh. We needed a fresh outlook on how to go about tackling things. And this is exactly what we achieved today. A fresh outlook.
Participant 7	In addition to this, *** ¹⁵ college didn't have anything. First they go to chapel; eventually we are doing this, blah blah blah, and end of it. You never hear about that ever again. So, if we were to do things like cleaning the river, doing something big, something they would notice each and every day. It is actually a different way of tackling them; you don't really have to speak to them, to get the message across. You can actually just do something and their, how it impacts them, is how it is going to give a positive approach on peer counselors.
Participant 9	It is a lot like those therapy sessions you know, you are crying, just watch yourself sort out your own problems. Laughing.
Participant 4	Coming back to this, this is my last comment. Maybe after the AIDS we can use some of the money we raised to ok, some of that is going to some AIDS village. But some of the money we can use for the river, but I will be supervising you. (Laughing) I have a sickness, I can't work there.
Participant 5	I think that basically what we have summed up today is that by having this positive attitude we can change what, needs to be changed that needs to be brought across.
Researcher	Anyone else?
Participant 2	So, I don't know, are we actually going to have people that is going to have meetings with the principal and. Ja we can do that. We can present it to the people that are going to be on the SRC. Talk to them and tell them that it is in the student's best interest to have a peer counselor in the SRC, you can't represent students without a person from us.
Participant 4	Yes, we have to know what is happening in our school so that in order for our functions not to clash. And as well get help from SRC.
Participant 2	In a way we don't seem like opposing the SRC and whatever. It is not like a competition, who can be seen the most? Who can have whatever the most? It is just *** ¹⁶ as a whole and we just end up being one unit rather than the small little organisations, which is all private. Ja, thank you.
Participant 9	Ok, going back to the remark that I made before, trying to succeed in

¹⁵ *** Names have been deleted

¹⁶ *** Names have been deleted

	believing in ourselves and doing what we believe in, we are going to finally make the difference.
Participant 4	Ok people, thank you for listening to me and hearing your appreciation. (Laughing)
Participant 2	Whatever we want to do, like the AIDS week, they should also come in the Wednesday.
Researcher	Thank you guys for your input.



FIELD NOTES

OBSERVATIONAL NOTES

The learners at this particular school were very friendly and polite. The participants were very eager to share their experiences with the researcher. There was no need to set group rules as all the participants showed respect and tolerance towards each other. The participants seemed very confident and comfortable during the interviews. They seemed to have a lot of information to share with the researcher. One participant did not participate at all during the interview no matter how many attempts the researcher made to get the participant involved. One can only wonder why.

The sessions lasted for between 40 and 60 minutes. As the interviews took place after school, there was no noise or disturbances from other learners at the school.

THEORETICAL NOTES



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It was obvious from the interviews that the participants felt frustrated and insecure because other learners have not made use of their services. The participants were dedicated to being effective peer counselors, this view point is derived by the fact that they were punctual and all attended the interview session.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

I needed to remind myself to listen actively so that I could track any comments or ideas that would allow the participants to expand on ideas relating to peer counseling. I had to remind myself that I needed to be quiet and simply just listen to what the participants have to say without me adding my opinions. I tried to clarify and probe in order to get as much information from the participants as possible.

I had to remind myself not to ask any leading questions and to remain neutral throughout the process in order to facilitate the interviews effectively.

PERSONAL NOTES

During the interviews I found it difficult to change my role from that of an educator to that of a researcher. It was difficult not to express my views and opinions on what was said. But more importantly I was very tempted to reassure and offer the participants advice. The interviews left me feeling recharged and alive. This was the one aspect of this research that I enjoyed most. It helped to put everything into perspective for me.



APPENDIX C

Protocol for the Independent coder



PROTOCOL FOR INDEPENDENT CODER

Tesch's steps of descriptive analysis of open coding (in Creswell, 1994:154) was discussed with the independent coder, who was familiar with this process for analyzing data of focus group transcriptions and field notes. The following process was adhered to:

1. Read through all the transcriptions of the focus group interviews and the field notes to get a sense of the story line.
2. Pick the most interesting and shortest document from the pack. Ask yourself, "What is this about?" Write down thoughts you might have about the underlying meaning and write it down in the margin. Repeat this process with all the generated data.
3. Make a list of all topics. Cluster together similar topics. Formulate columns with major topics, unique topics and leftovers.
4. Take this list and go back to your data. Use codes next to the appropriate sections of the text.
5. Use the most descriptive wording for your topics and then divided into categories as well as sub-categories.
6. Write the codes in alphabetical order after making a final decision on the abbreviation for each category.
7. Perform a preliminary analysis after categorizing the data material, which belongs together.

Consensual conversations were scheduled and dates were set.

